MARCH 1952

COMMENTARY

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The Driving Force Behind Soviet Imperialism — PETER MEYER

George Orwell and the Politics of Truth — LIONEL TRILLING

"Civil Liberties," 1952—A Study in Confusion — IRVING KRISTOL

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On the Horizon—
The Movie Camera and the American — ROBERT WARSHOW

The Study of Man—
Will Births Outstrip Mankind's Resources? — MORTON CLURMAN

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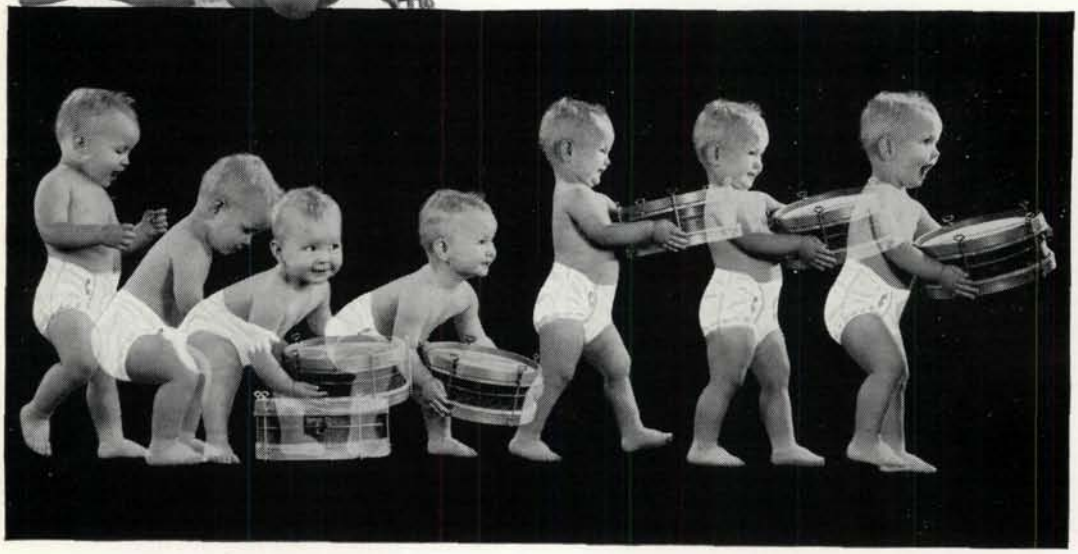

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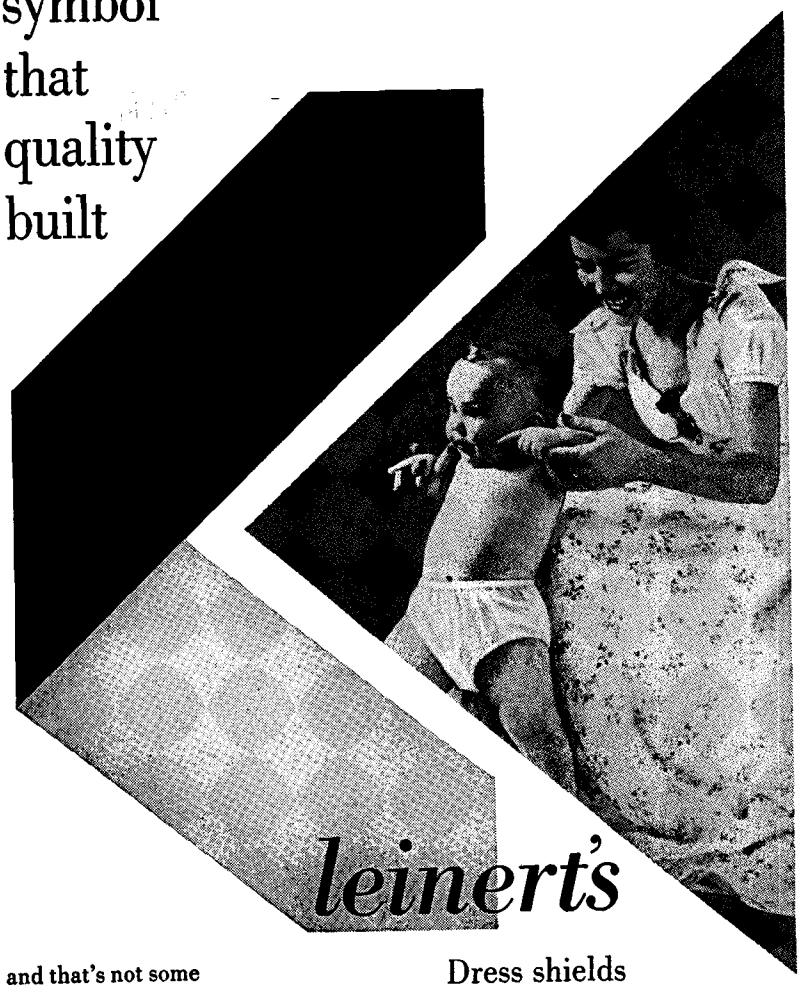

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COMMENTARY

MARCH 1952 VOLUME 13, NUMBER 3

Who Is Guilty of the Katyn Massacre?	*G. F. Hudson*	203
The Driving Force Behind Soviet Imperialism	*Peter Meyer*	209
George Orwell and the Politics of Truth	*Lionel Trilling*	218
"Civil Liberties," 1952—A Study in Confusion	*Irving Kristol*	228
The Man Who Invented the Commandos	*Edwin Samuel*	237
The Religious Stirring on the Campus	*Will Herberg*	242
Israel's Press Mirrors the New State	*Ernest Stock*	249
The Golden Years *A Story*	*Sylvia Rothchild*	256
The Figure *A Poem*	*David Ignatow*	263
From the American Scene		
The Code According to Mama-Tante-Mom	*Harry Gersh*	264
Cedars of Lebanon		
The Hallowing of the Name	*Hugo Bergmann*	271
On the Horizon		
The Movie Camera and the American	*Robert Warshow*	275
The Study of Man		
Will Births Outstrip Mankind's Resources?	*Morton Clurman*	282
Letters from Readers		291
Books in Review		
Israel: The Beginning and Tomorrow, by Hal Lehrman	*Richard H. S. Crossman*	294
Judaism and Modern Man, by Will Herberg	*Nahum N. Glatzer*	296
In the Absence of Angels, by Hortense Calisher	*Isa Kapp*	298
Bréviaire de la Haine: Le IIIe Reich et les Juifs, by Léon Poliakov	*Hannah Arendt*	300
David and Bathsheba, by Ari Ibn-Zahav	*Robert Langbaum*	304

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

The Time of Singing Is Come *Theodor H. Gaster*

For, lo, the winter is past, / The rain is over and gone; / The flowers appear on the earth; / The time of singing is come. . . . These lines will be chanted in the synagogue this Passover, along with the rest of that beautiful—and bewildering—document known as the Song of Songs. Mr. Gaster recounts the origins of these songs ascribed to Solomon, and explores the meanings given to them by Jewish tradition.

Carolina's Rehearsal for November *Samuel Lubell*

With every election of the past dozen years, the theme of a possible Southern breakaway from the national Democratic party has been a favorite one for political speculation. In 1952, according to Samuel Lubell, the possibility has become a near certainty, and he finds a picture in microcosm of things to come in the defeat suffered by Senator Frank Graham in the North Carolina primaries two years ago.

The Devil and Graham Greene *Lionel Trilling*

An analysis of the moral and spiritual roots of the art of an outstanding contemporary Catholic novelist.

Historians in Israel *H. Schmidt*

The international academic fraternity has a new member: the Israelis, who are making their contributions, and in many cases important ones, in a language incomprehensible to their fellow scholars abroad. Here a young historian, formerly with the Hebrew University and now at Oxford, offers a guided tour through the leading work going on in Israel in the field of history. In "The Study of Man."

The Uprooted and the Transplanted *Elliot E. Cohen*

In a commentary on Oscar Handlin's *The Uprooted,* a study of the immigrant experience in the United States, Elliot E. Cohen tells why he considers this book to be one of the most intellectually suggestive works on American society and culture in recent years.

America's Small-Town Jew *Lee J. Levinger*

It is a little odd to realize that the first four Jews elected governors of American states were all men who lived in towns where there were very few Jews, and in states where there were hardly any Jewish votes. Rabbi Levinger describes the life of such "small-town Jews" and examines their prospects for survival.

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COMMENTARY

WHO IS GUILTY OF THE KATYN MASSACRE?

The Truth at the Bottom of the Pit

G. F. HUDSON

THE massacre of Katyn is quite unique among the famous atrocities of history in that there is doubt by whom it was committed. In other cases, historians may dispute over the number of the victims, over the motives of the act, or over the responsibilities of particular individuals, but there is no question by what nation or faction the deed was done. Nobody doubts that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was committed by the French Catholics, or that the massacre of Chios was the work of the Turks, or that it was the Nazis who put Jewish families into the gas chambers of Auschwitz. But with regard to the corpses of Katyn, as in a detective story, the question facing the historian is: Who did it?

Inevitably this question has involved polit-

EDITORIAL NOTE: As a magazine devoted to Jewish affairs and contemporary issues, and particularly to the analysis of events bearing upon the liberties and decencies that we as individuals and as groups enjoy in civilized lands, COMMENTARY has from the first regarded totalitarianism, fascist, Nazi, or Communist, as a matter for vigilant and intelligent scrutiny. Opinions may differ as to how best to combat this inhuman and immoral thing—and we have printed differing opinions. But that it *is* evil, that we cannot countenance self-deluding ignorance or wishful thinking with regard to it—this we have never doubted. So, to the best of our ability, we have tried to unveil the true dimensions of the monster, noting the anomaly that, where its Communist species was involved, we sometimes earned ourselves little sympathy in certain liberal circles.

This has served to remind us that until the blind spots in "enlightened" opinion are eliminated, it will be hopeless to expect the American community as a whole to have an adequate appreciation of the meaning and menace of Communism. Everyone, these days, is "anti-Communist" and cheerfully assents to denunciations of Stalin or to praise of one or another version of the American way. But just as it was once possible to be "anti-fascist" without being able to recognize the true features of totalitarianism, so today it seems to be possible to be "anti-Communist" in the same way. To the extent that such a recognition is lacking, anti-Communism, far from being a dead issue, may yet turn out to be the liveliest, because the deadliest, of issues.

We publish, in this month's COMMENTARY, four consecutive articles—by G. F. Hudson, Peter Meyer, Lionel Trilling, and Irving Kristol—that in their different ways illuminate different aspects of what Communism is and what values we are defending against it. These authors are not necessarily in entire agreement with one another; but we feel that each makes a specific contribution, and that the sum total furthers the understanding of what is beyond a doubt the crucial political and moral reality of our epoch.—EDITOR

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ical interests and passions on the largest scale. At the time of the German announcement of the discovery of the Katyn graves in April 1943, there was no impartial investigation of the matter, for although the Polish government-in-exile in London asked for an inquiry by the International Red Cross, Russia refused to agree to it, and the International Red Cross declined to act without Russia's consent. Everyone was therefore free to have his own opinion about Katyn in accordance with his prejudices, and Dr. Goebbels had as obvious a propaganda interest in attributing the crime to Russia as Russia and her Western allies had in repudiating his accusation. Since the end of the war, the Communists everywhere have resolutely maintained that the assertion of Russian guilt was only a Nazi slander endorsed by Polish fascists (even though Communists are always ready privately to maintain that the extermination of "class enemies" is justifiable whenever expediency requires it). As for Westerners generally, including many who have no pro-Soviet sympathies, they feel that any effort to establish Soviet responsibility for the Katyn massacre would be retrospectively a rehabilitation of Goebbels, besides giving aid and comfort to those who have raised doubts about atrocities that certainly were committed by the Nazis. But the question is, after all, one which historians in the future will judge strictly according to the evidence, and the evidence now available is already sufficient for reaching a conclusion, once political preconceptions are discarded.

FOR the past month a Congressional investigating committee has been holding hearings on the Katyn massacre—the murder of thousands of Polish officers in a Russian forest, which the Nazis charged had been committed by the Soviets, and the Soviets by the Nazis. Here, G. F. HUDSON, Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, guides us through the tangle of charges and evidence—for there is evidence, and when looked at objectively it points to a conclusion. Mr. Hudson is a regular contributor to the London *Economist*, and has contributed articles on the Korean war and Iran to earlier issues of COMMENTARY.

IN SPITE of the accusations exchanged between Berlin and Moscow during the war, the Katyn case is not primarily a duel between Germans and Russians. The victims of the deed were Poles, and it was a fate that fell upon them not only as individuals but as a nation; it was a great national disaster. About a third of the pre-war officer corps of the Polish army, including both regular soldiers and reservists, disappeared in Russia. The Poles as a nation could not but be deeply concerned to find out what had happened to their missing officers; moreover, these officers had families in Poland and numerous relatives and friends in the Polish army that fought in Western Europe and North Africa between 1939 and 1945, and the evidence which they have collected is of the greatest importance for the solution of the problem.

During the last two years this evidence has been given to the world in three books* by Poles who were directly concerned in the investigation of the affair. One is by General Wladislaw Anders, who was commander-in-chief of the Polish army which was recruited from prisoners and deportees in Russia during the temporary Polish-Soviet reconciliation of 1941-1942 and subsequently saw action in the Middle East; the second is by a well-known Polish painter, Joseph Czapski, who, as a wartime officer, was put in charge of a special commission of the Polish army to trace the missing prisoners in Russia; the third is by Joseph Mackiewicz, a former Polish journalist and member of the Polish underground, who went to Katyn while the corpses were being disinterred by the Polish Red Cross in the spring of 1943.

It may be objected in advance against all this testimony that it comes from anti-Communist Poles now in exile who have every motive for fabricating charges against the Soviet Union. It has to be remembered, however, that in the period 1941-1943 Poland

*General Wladislaw Anders, *Katyn* (Editions France Empire, Paris). Joseph Czapski, *The Inhuman Land* (Chatto and Windus, London; to be published this month by Sheed and Ward, New York). Joseph Mackiewicz, *The Katyn Wood Murders* (British Book Center, New York).

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was at war with Germany and not with Russia. The Communists have, it is true, charged the wartime Polish government in London with being "Hitlerite," but the vigor with which the Polish armed forces fought against Germany for six years, and the uncompromising character of the resistance within Poland under the leadership of the so-called "London Poles" prove the absurdity of this accusation. Whatever were the Polish grievances against Russia, the wartime Polish hatred for Nazi Germany was far too strong for there to have been any general willingness among Poles to connive at a fabrication of evidence against Russia in support of Nazi allegations.

The secret police of a one-party totalitarian state in its own territory, with witnesses entirely in its power, can concoct such a case, but the Polish government in London and its delegates within Poland represented a coalition of all Polish parties with the exception of the Communists, and they were always seriously divided over the attitude to be adopted toward Russia. In 1941 Zalecki resigned as Foreign Minister because he thought General Sikorski was going too far in his effort to conciliate Russia and in 1944 the Mikolajczyk cabinet broke up on the question of the concessions that might be made to Moscow. If, therefore, certain anti-Russian extremists had had the idea of falsifying the evidence about Katyn in order to fix the guilt on Russia, such a maneuver would at once have been exposed by those who were working for a reconciliation with Russia; moreover, the number of persons involved in the evidence, whether as witnesses or investigators, was far too large, and their political complexion much too varied, for any fabrication by a clique to have gone undiscovered.

THE Katyn story begins with the capture of a large part of the Polish army in September 1939 by the Soviet forces that invaded Poland from the east seventeen days after the Germans had invaded it from the west. Both Germany and Russia subsequently took the position that the Polish state had ceased to exist and that Poles, in accordance with the German-Soviet agreement for the new partition of Poland, had become German or Soviet subjects. There were, however, two differences in the relation of Germany and of Russia to Poland after the joint conquest. Germany remained at war with Britain and France, which recognized the Polish government-in-exile as a sovereign belligerent ally, and a Polish army remained in the field, first in France and later in Britain; Russia was not embarrassed by any such situation. Secondly, Germany was a signatory to the Geneva convention on prisoners of war, whereas Russia was not.

Among the prisoners of war captured by the Russians (a total of about 230,000 according to Soviet sources), nearly all the officers, numbering about 9,000, and a number of non-commissioned officers and private soldiers of special categories, such as gendarmerie and frontier guards, making 15,000 in all, were placed in three special camps at Kozielsk, Starobielsk, and Ostashkov. In these camps they were subjected to lengthy interrogations, not for eliciting military information—for all fighting had ceased—but to discover their family and personal connections, their political opinions and former political activities (if any). Finally, in April 1940, about 400 were sorted out from the 15,000 and sent to a camp at Pavlishchev Bor, whence they were later transferred to another camp at Griazovets; these were all either Polish citizens of German extraction (and therefore regarded as friendly during the heyday of the Nazi-Soviet pact) or Poles who, whether from conviction or prudence, had expressed pro-Soviet sentiments during the interrogations. The rest of the prisoners in the three camps were sent away to unknown destinations, and those who were removed to Pavlishchev Bor did not know what had become of them. Later, the prisoners in Pavlishchev Bor began to receive letters from relatives in Poland asking for news of the others; from which they inferred that correspondence—which was still permitted to them—was being denied to their comrades.

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On October 7, 1940, German troops entered Rumania, and for the first time the Soviet government became aware of the possibility that Hitler might, after all, in spite of that master stroke of Soviet diplomacy, the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, reach out for the Ukraine. Three weeks later a Polish officer who had shown particularly marked pro-Soviet inclinations, a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Berling, and two others were summoned to meet the two chiefs of the NKVD, Beria and Merkulov, at the Lubianka Prison in Moscow. There they were asked whether they would help in organizing Polish military units for possible future use, under Soviet command, against Germany. Berling agreed, but suggested that the Polish officers who had been removed from the Kozielsk, Starobielsk, and Ostashkov camps should be brought into the scheme. To which Beria replied: "No, not those. We made a grave mistake about them." This cryptic remark, repeated by Berling to other officers, caused much speculation among the Polish prisoners confined in the camp at Griazovets.

When, in June 1941, Hitler launched his invasion of Russia and the Russian army suffered shattering initial defeats, British diplomacy brought about a renewal of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Polish government in London. Russia agreed to grant an "amnesty" to all Polish prisoners of war and deportees in Soviet territory and allow the Polish government to recruit among them an army which would take part in the war against Germany. General Anders, who had been held in solitary confinement in a Russian prison, was appointed to command the new army; he set up his headquarters and soon Poles were arriving to enlist from all parts of the Soviet Union, even from the Kolyma gold fields of northeastern Siberia. But it was quickly realized that there were hardly any ex-officers among them and that thousands of officers who had been captured in 1939, including a number of generals, were missing. Inquiries were addressed to the Soviet government, but no satisfactory reply was received; Soviet officials simply said that all prisoners had been released in accordance with the agreement and that they did not know the whereabouts of particular individuals. When after several months not a single Pole who had been in Kozielsk, Starobielsk, or Ostashkov before these camps were cleared in the spring of 1940 (except for the 400 taken to Pavlishchev Bor) had reached the Polish recruitment centers, the Polish military authorities became very uneasy. At their request the Polish government in London made inquiries in Poland through the Polish underground to ascertain whether any news of the missing men had been received there, but was informed that their families had not received any letters from them since May 1940, though previous to that date correspondence had been permitted.

When representations to the Soviet Commissariat for Foreign Affairs produced no result, the matter was taken up directly with Stalin, first by the Polish ambassador, and then by the Polish Prime Minister, General Sikorski, who visited Moscow in December 1941. Stalin's only contribution to the solution of the problem was the suggestion that the missing prisoners might have escaped into Manchuria—which implied that they had been sent to Siberia. At the request of the Poles, the British and American ambassadors in Moscow also called the attention of the Soviet government to the matter, but with no effect. By April 1943, after a year and a half of search and inquiry had failed to produce any trace of the missing officers, the Polish leaders had already come to the conclusion that the Soviet authorities were lying in their assertions that they did not know what had happened to the prisoners, and reluctantly inferred that they were no longer alive.

In April 1943 the German radio announced the discovery of corpses in the uniform of Polish officers in mass graves in the forest of Katyn not far from Smolensk, and declared that they were victims of a Russian massacre. The Polish response to the news

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was to issue a public statement relating the history of the affair (which had not hitherto been mentioned in the Allied press) and to request an investigation of the Katyn graves by the International Red Cross. The German government also invited an International Red Cross investigation, but the Soviet government not only refused to agree, but also broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish government, accusing it of complicity with Germany in not having immediately denounced the German allegations. At the same time the Soviet government put forward a version of the fate of the Polish officers of which nothing had previously been heard; the government now stated that they had been confined in camps to the west of Smolensk and had been captured by the Germans when they overran the area in the course of their invasion in July 1941.

It is clear that if this Soviet version is true, the Soviet leaders must have been aware of what had happened during the whole period when Polish, British, and American inquiries were being addressed to them in the effort to trace the missing prisoners. Why, then, did they not say that the Polish prisoners, along with some hundreds of thousands of Russian soldiers, had fallen into German hands during the great retreat of 1941? If the Russians were innocent in the matter, there was no reason why they should not have admitted from the beginning what they subsequently alleged. If, on the other hand, they were guilty, they had a very cogent reason for not telling such a story except as a last resort; knowing that the Katyn graves were in German-occupied territory, they could only hope that they would not be discovered, but if they told the Poles that their prisoners were in German hands, the Poles would inquire for them in Germany through the International Red Cross, and the Germans might become too interested in looking for them. So long as the Russians persisted in saying that they did not know where the Polish officers were, nobody could prove that they were dead; only with the exhumation of the corpses of Katyn did the problem of the missing prisoners become a question as to who had murdered them.

After the Russians had reoccupied the Katyn area in September 1943, they appointed a "Special Commission for Establishing and Investigating the Whereabouts of the Shooting of Polish Officers by German Fascist Aggressors in the Katyn Forest." This body, composed entirely of Soviet citizens—not even Communist Poles were represented on it—published a report which elaborated the Soviet version that had been put forward after the German announcement of the discovery of the graves. This report estimated the total number of corpses at 11,000 and declared that the Germans, having killed the Polish prisoners in the autumn of 1941, decided after their defeat at Stalingrad to charge the crime against the Russians, and therefore in March 1943, a month before publicly announcing the discovery of the graves, dug up all the bodies, removed from them all documents bearing dates later than April 1940, and reburied them.

BEFORE the Germans withdrew from Katyn, they allowed the Polish Red Cross to carry out an examination of the Katyn graves. The Polish Red Cross made no public statement about what they found, and could not therefore be charged with helping German anti-Soviet propaganda; their primary purpose was to identify as many bodies as possible in order to inform the relatives of the dead men, but their full report on the evidence was transmitted secretly to the Polish government in London through the underground.

The Polish Red Cross investigation showed that the total number of corpses in the Katyn graves was not quite 4,500,* and that all of them had come from the Kozielsk camp; there were no prisoners from the Starobielsk or Ostashkov camps. The Germans, however, had already announced that there were be-

*Polish official statements at that time indicated a total of about 11,000 Poles missing, but later collation of the records showed that the figure was higher. As the Russians had never communicated any lists of names of prisoners of war, the compilation was a matter of considerable difficulty.

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tween 10,000 and 12,000 corpses, and the Soviet Commission report, as mentioned above, put the figure at 11,000. The Germans naturally had an interest in magnifying the number of victims for propaganda purposes. For the Russians the significance of the number involved was rather different. If only the prisoners from Kozielsk were in the Katyn graves, where were those from Starobielsk and Ostashkov? None of them has ever been seen again, so it may be presumed that those who were not at Katyn perished elsewhere, but nothing definite is known of their fate. By putting the figure at 11,000 the Soviet Commission's report implied that all the prisoners from the three camps had been killed at Katyn, and the problem of separately accounting for the prisoners from Starobielsk and Ostashkov was eliminated.

The Polish Red Cross found about 3,300 letters and postcards on the corpses, none bearing a date or stamp later than April 1940; a number of diaries all ending in April or the first week of May 1940 (one of them describing in its last entry the journey in a truck under NKVD escort from the railway station of Gniezdovo to Katyn forest); and hundreds of copies of newspapers or dated fragments, all of March or April 1940. The Soviet Commission report, as we have seen, implies not that the Polish Red Cross was lying on this matter, but that they had been deceived, for it alleges that the Germans had dug up the bodies in March 1943 and had removed all documentation of dates later than April 1940.

This is the crux of the whole story and Mackiewicz in his book has no difficulty in refuting the Soviet explanation. In the first place, it was not only a question of removing papers, but also of substituting others—of rewriting and forging details in diaries and especially of producing the required quantity of Russian newspapers of the spring of 1940, which, except on the extremely improbable assumption that large stocks of them had fallen into German hands, would have had to be specially reprinted from files for the purpose of being planted on the bodies. But even if all this elaborate forgery had been carried out, the alleged process of planting was technically impossible. As Mackiewicz writes of his observation of the exhumations at Katyn:

"As everything was soaked and glued with a most loathsome, stinking and gummy cadaverous liquid, it was impossible to unbutton the pockets or pull off the boots. It was therefore necessary to cut them with knives in order to find the personal belongings. . . . No human device or technique would enable a search to be made through those pockets, taking out some objects and putting in others, and then to button up the uniforms, and replace and squeeze the bodies again into a mass, layer upon layer. . . ."

Indeed, it is not necessary to rely on the Polish evidence in order to reject the story of the faking of the documentation in March 1943 as a manifest impossibility. Whether the bodies had been in the earth since the spring of 1940 or the autumn of 1941, they would certainly have been in just such a condition as Mackiewicz describes, and it would have been absolutely impossible to conceal the traces of the alleged faking operation. To have presented such a piece of work to the impartial experts of the International Red Cross would have involved certain exposure. We must conclude, therefore, that the alleged exhumation and reburial in March 1943 never took place, and that the dating of the documentation on the corpses determines the date of the massacre. And, as Mackiewicz says, if we know when it was done, we also know who did it.

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THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SOVIET IMPERIALISM

Is It a New Menace or the Old Bear Reawakened?

PETER MEYER

ON JUNE 28, 1951, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, brought to the attention of the American public a question discussed up to then by only a few scholars and isolated groups of emigrés. The question was: are we fighting Russia, or are we fighting Soviet Communism? Does the aggressiveness of Russia's present rulers, with the resulting permanent crisis and threat of war, flow from the very same motives and interests that led the czars to try to expand in more or less the same directions as the Soviets; or is it impelled by an ideology and a system—Communism—international in its character and its aims? That is: do we face Communism dressed as Russian nationalism, or Russian nationalism dressed as Communism?

The political consequences of the answer decided on are enormous, as Secretary Acheson well knew, and as the New York *Times* emphasized at the time of his testimony: "Secretary Acheson pointed out that the Soviet rulers have followed the imperialist Russian tradition. . . . The development of the Duchy of Muscovy from a vassal and tribute collector of the Mongol Tartars to an empire which first enslaved the Russian people themselves . . . and then embarked on conquering other nations until it dominates half of Europe and an even larger part of Asia, is part of elementary history. Viewed in the light of this history, there is a peculiar unreality attaching itself to the American policies which after the First World War opposed any 'dismemberment' of the Russian empire even by nations fighting for their freedom from its rule. . . . Mr. Acheson's statements show that these policies have been replaced by a new realism."

Russian emigré leaders in this country immediately rose to protest against this suggestion of dismemberment and challenged Mr. Acheson's view of Russian history: "The Bolshevik regime," a group of democratic Russian exiles wrote to the *Times* on July 8, "created an entirely new species of state. . . . Stalin is not an instrument in the hands of the Russian people actuated by 'imperialist tradition' but quite the reverse. . . ." Other emigrés, belonging to the minority nationalities of the Soviet Union, stood squarely behind Secretary Acheson's interpretation: "International Communism," wrote the Ukrainian leader Lev E. Dobriansky to the *Times* on July 9, "constitutes the mere ideological trappings of the modern Russian imperialist builders of the long-awaited 'Third Rome.' . . . The conspicuous Soviet traits of conquest, domination over foreign peoples, terrorism and national genocide [are] the chief ingredients of traditional Russian imperialism. . . ."

Obviously, the issue is a crucial one, affecting as it does the basic aims of American defense policy in the face of the Soviet challenge, as well as our policy toward the Russian and non-Russian peoples—Ukrainians, Georgians, Uzbeks, etc.—that inhabit the Soviet Union. (On the right to national independence of the satellite countries, of course, there is no dispute at all among anti-Communists.) It is clear that the fate of these peoples constitutes a long-range prob-

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lem of great significance. It is equally clear, however, that our answer to the question—Is our enemy Russia or Communism?—is of great immediate importance. For the strategy and tactics of the West vis-à-vis the Kremlin must remain hesitant until we arrive at an answer; and it is all-important that it be a correct one. It seems that Secretary Acheson had found the answer to his own satisfaction: our enemy is indeed the same old Russian imperialism *redivivus,* and our policy should be to "contain" it. Since the familiar is always less frightening than the unfamiliar, it would be reassuring if he were right. But is he?

BOLSHEVIK policy has undergone a peculiar evolution since 1917, beginning at an extreme of internationalism and ending at the other extreme of a kind of patriotic xenophobia that regards "cosmopolitanism" as the blackest sin. Lenin would have ridiculed the claim that it was important to preserve and defend the Russian empire, or that Russia and Russian culture were superior to other nations and their cultures. During World War I, he insisted that the only genuine socialist program was that expressed in the slogan of "revolutionary defeatism"—only those who worked for the defeat of their own army and government were true socialists. And no one could be considered a socialist, he added, if he did not fight for the right of all national minorities to full self-determination, including secession.

After the Bolshevik seizure of power, understandably enough, this policy was changed: the Bolsheviks were now for the defense of their "proletarian state." But they were not only for its defense in the geographic or strategic sense; their notion of defense included, when feasible, aggressive warfare to extend socialist rule to other countries. As Lenin had written in 1915: "The victorious proletariat of that country [in which the socialist revolution first takes place], having expropriated the capitalists and organized socialist production at home, will rise against the rest of the capitalist world, attracting the oppressed classes of other countries, raising among them revolts against the capitalists, *launching, in case of necessity, armed forces against the exploiting classes and their states*" (my emphasis). This idea was invoked by the left Communists who opposed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany in 1918. Did we not always say, they argued, that we would conduct a revolutionary war against capitalist states when we came to power? Lenin agreed this would be most desirable, but he pointed out that it was impossible under the circumstances. The masses did not want to fight, the army had disintegrated. Was it not more reasonable to give the Germans what they demanded and preserve state power for a future comeback?

In this debate and in all Bolshevik discussion in these early years, the idea of "Russia" played no role at all. Both sides were arguing about what was better for "world revolution": to risk a defeat in a glorious struggle against overwhelming odds while trying to arouse the international proletariat by a heroic example—or to preserve a bastion from which the world revolution would strike out in better times. It is significant that it was decided that some state power, even in Siberia, was preferable to a heroic example. And it is also significant that no one questioned the idea that aggressive war could be an important weapon of the revolution. When the Bolsheviks debated in 1920 whether the Red Army should pursue the defeated Poles beyond the Bug River, the issue was again a purely practical one: neither side disputed the morality of extending the revolution by arms—in effect, by aggressive, outright war. So when, later on, Social Democratic Georgia was overrun by the Bolsheviks, the Politburo was unanimous in approving the act, and Trotsky—who had opposed the invasion of Poland on practical grounds—wrote a book defending this later one.

The final outcome of the discussions of these early days was the decision that, though such aggressive tactics were in principle legitimate, it was inexpedient to adopt them under the circumstances of that time. Rather than risk the loss of Bolshevik control

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over Russia by launching a revolutionary crusade into Europe, that control was to be consolidated so that Russia could serve as the base and fortress of world revolution. But the result of this decision was, in the end, that Russia was cut off increasingly from Western Europe and forced to develop along lines of her own. These lines were determined by the peculiar conditions of Russia as a historical entity, and—as the power struggles of the 20's decided—by Stalin.

THE notion of exporting Communism by force of arms seemed to have been decisively abandoned when Stalin attained exclusive power in the middle 20's on his program of "socialism in one country." Lenin had insisted that, since Russia was a backward country, the Communists could not retain power there for long unless reinforced by victorious proletarian revolutions in the advanced countries of the West. Stalin now claimed that, on the contrary, Russia *was* able to achieve socialism with its own resources. Hearing this, Western statesmen rejoiced and the Communist Left Opposition despaired. For both were convinced that socialism, understood as an economy of plenty, equality, and freedom, would fail in isolated, backward, impoverished Russia. What they did not realize was that Stalin's "socialism" would, by the end of the 20's, mean the centralized exploitation of society by a hierarchy of "administrators" wielding all economic and political power. And such a system, resting on an economy of scarcity instead of plenty, *could* be established inside one country, and especially a backward one.

How did this new system come into existence? Had Stalin, whatever his original intentions, become transformed, willy-nilly, into a successor of the czars, ruling not only in their place but in their manner, with their motives, and—ultimately—with their policies? In later years it began to look this way, and one should not underestimate the importance of the social and spiritual forces specific to Russia in the transformations that the Bolshevik regime underwent there. But actually it was not the unexpected resurgence of the Slavic soul, but rather the presence of a very specific economic and social situation that led to the total liquidation of socialist hopes.

The Bolsheviks had seized power as a tiny even though highly disciplined and organized minority. The industrial working class in Russia was relatively small, uneducated, and inexperienced in politics. The peasant masses supported the Bolsheviks in the moment of revolution, but could not be relied on after that. This lack of broad social support, plus foreign and civil wars, demanded a thorough centralization of power if Bolshevik rule was to be maintained.

In order to hold on to power, the Bolsheviks sacrificed much of their pre-revolutionary program. Instead of workers' control in the factories, they gave absolute power to directors and managers appointed by the party; instead of equalizing incomes, they introduced high salaries and premiums, first for bourgeois specialists, but later for their own party officials too. The radical democratic program proclaimed by Lenin in *State and Revolution* in the summer of 1917 went overboard: instead of officials elected by, responsible to, and subject to recall by the voters, there were commissars with dictatorial powers, a one-party dictatorship, and terror directed against all opposition.

A centralized, state-owned, planned economy provided, in the absence of democratic checks and balances, a firmer basis for the absolute power of a privileged class than ever capitalism could. This was not an entirely new phenomenon: capitalism is something of an exception in history, and most of the privileged and ruling classes of the past have derived their power from the state, not from private property with the rights that cluster about and extend from it. This is especially true of Asiatic societies, which were ruled, literally for millennia, by despotic hierarchies. In Russia, where such traditions were strong, the evolution toward bureaucratic despotism was easier than it would have been in any other European country.

In the course of two decades, the Stalinist bureaucracy succeeded in completely liquidating the independent peasantry and totally

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enslaving the urban working class. It became the undisputed master of the country and, having done that, was ready to enter the lists as a competitor for world power—if it got the opportunity. In the Second World War, this opportunity came.

But why are the new rulers of Russia not satisfied to stay at home and exploit the immense natural riches and endless reservoirs of manpower they now possess?

The answer is that they are driven to expansion by the inner conflicts of the new social system they have established. In every modern society there exists some method of regulating the distribution of the means of production and of labor power among the various branches of production. In the free-market countries, the law of supply and demand maintains, even at the cost of recurrent crises, some equilibrium. In Soviet society, this law was superseded by the universal monopoly of the rulers of the state. The distribution of labor and of the national product now depends on their planning. But rational planning and harmonizing of conflicting interests are impossible where free discussion, criticism, timely correction of mistakes by the pressure of public opinion, and democratic bargaining between social groups are outlawed. The omnipotent ruling group tends to sacrifice the various interests of the community to its own appetite for power, and to substitute wishful thinking for economic realities. Their plans, however unrealistic, *must* be fulfilled.

Not allowed to criticize or discuss the orders given them, Soviet managers and administrators are forced to cheat. This cheating undermines the reliability of all inventories and statistics. At a party conference in February 1941, Georgii Malenkov cited a typical example. Four different but simultaneous reports about the goods available in a factory were obtained from, respectively, the head of the supply department, the chief accountant, the plant director, and a committee of inspection: they differed by several hundred per cent. This is the stuff Soviet statistics are made of. They are kept secret, which makes public control impossible, and the planners themselves obtain a grievously distorted picture of reality from them.

Mistakes in planning are inevitable, and as they cannot be criticized and corrected in time, they swell to colossal proportions. The annals of Soviet economy are full of stories about factories built in impossible locations, machines inoperative for lack of some parts, goods sent back and forth several times through the vastnesses of Russia, industries left without raw materials, goods rotting for lack of transportation. Often the mistakes are discovered only when the situation approaches disaster. Then a campaign of "self-criticism" breaks loose on orders from above; the resultant purge of scapegoats frequently disorganizes production still more.

The disproportions in planning are not accidental. Their existence is the inevitable result of the absolute rule of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy everywhere inclines to waste, duplication, superfluous paper work, the building of "office empires," and parasitism. It is not difficult to imagine the extent of these abuses where there is no public control and the bureaucrats have the power to jail and execute their critics. Occasionally, the Soviet government decides to correct some of the most flagrant excesses, and then we get glimpses of the real situation. In the spring of 1941, it was discovered that there were several hundred special executives in the various plants of Moscow factories whose only task was to hire new workers, and that every one of them hired on an average one worker a day. At the same time, it was officially stated that in the administration of the kolkhozes of the Rostov district alone, there were 50,000 officials who were, even by the standards of Soviet bureaucratic administration, completely superfluous. Many such examples were quoted in one of the campaigns of "self-criticism" at that time. And this after twenty years of official preaching against "bureaucratism" and after endless purges, which usually only replaced old bureaucrats with new ones, less skilled and more rapacious. It could not be otherwise in a system that leaves nothing to individual ini-

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tiative, controls every step in public and private life by party decisions, watches everybody and everything, and maintains parallel apparatuses to supervise each other.

The costs of this bureaucratic machine are tremendous. And if we add the colossal outlays and the diversion of manpower necessary for the maintenance of the army, militia, secret police, etc., we can easily understand why the living standards of Russian workers and kolkhoz peasants are so low.

The entire mechanism of totalitarian society works to the disadvantage of the direct producers of material wealth. The position of every bureaucrat, his prestige, his advancement, his salary, his job, and often his life, depend on how he fulfills and overfulfills the plan. Owing absolute obedience to his superiors but wielding unlimited power over his subordinates, the manager tends to take the path of least resistance: he increases the exploitation of his workers. Low wages, long working hours, the speed-up are his methods. When the Soviet workers began to react by absenteeism and constantly changing their jobs, they were chained to their places of work by Draconian penal laws.

The uneconomical exploitation of labor to which the whole social system is conducive finds but its crassest expression in the slave labor camps, where millions are worked and starved to an early death. An economy in which labor is wasted and destroyed on such an immense scale, and which is burdened by such enormous unproductive expenses, remains too unproductive to sustain the accelerated tempo of investment that the bureaucracy demands. Thus Soviet society is plagued by chronic shortages of food, industrial consumption goods, raw materials, machines, skilled labor, manpower in general, and by recurrent economic convulsions.

While there were still strata of the population that were not fully integrated in the totalitarian economy, the crises could be solved at their expense: these classes would be rendered more exploitable by being reduced to the status of immediate serfs of the regime. The best example is the crisis that preceded the collectivization of agriculture. In the early 30's, the tremendous investments in heavy industry did not provide for enough manufactured consumers' goods to give to the peasants in exchange for the food and other things they raised. Offered too little compensation for their products, the peasants "went on strike," cut their production, slowed down their deliveries of food. The answer was the liquidation of the "kulaks" and forced collectivization. At the price of untold atrocities and a famine in which millions perished, the peasants were transformed into serfs of the bureaucracy.

By the end of the 30's, the totalitarian society in Russia had been fully established. There were no more classes to be expropriated, all strata of the population were totally enslaved, and a further intensification of the exploitation of available resources was rapidly reaching the point of diminishing returns. But new resources are present in the countries surrounding the Soviet Union—and would be available to her if organized and exploited in the Soviet way, and under Soviet power. Measured by Russian standards, and seen in the perspective of totalitarian—not capitalist—exploitation, even Poland and Rumania appeared as "have" countries whose "liberation" and integration in the Soviet economic order would be extremely profitable to the latter. And let me point out here that those who believe that the Stalinist regime has occupied neighboring countries or added satellites to its empire for "purely strategic reasons," in order to "protect its borders" and surround itself with a buffer zone of "friendly governments," simply do not understand the workings of the Soviet system. Soviet bureaucracy extends into foreign countries for the same reason that pioneers who "mine the soil" must continually move on—the form of exploitation is so wasteful that new resources are constantly needed.

Soviet expansion thus differs radically from traditional capitalist expansion. Russia obviously does not flood her dependent countries with cheap commodities. Rather her first step is to drain the occupied country of

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both industrial and agricultural goods; these are expropriated, requisitioned, or simply looted, and then shipped home. Russia usually does not export capital either—rather, she expropriates it as she expropriates goods. Here again the most primitive method of acquisition, the simple appropriation and transfer of capital goods, plays an important role at the beginning of an occupation—billions of dollars worth of industrial equipment, whole factories, whole industries have been removed from Germany and Manchuria and shipped to Russia.

But as soon as their rule in the given country has been stabilized the Soviets begin to exploit the expropriated means of production right on the spot. The forms are diverse. Some industries are put directly into Russian hands, as the uranium mines in Saxony and Bohemia. Some are controlled by mixed Soviet-satellite companies to which the satellites contribute the assets and the Russians the top management. Most are left formally in the hands of the satellite states, but operated under Russian control and supervision, and integrated in Soviet production plans. Tribute in money and commodities is exacted in the form of reparations payments, occupation costs, taxes for liberation, and even repayments—with interest—of subsidies the Soviets had originally paid to the Communist parties during the latter's struggle for power!

The satellites are required to sell their goods to the Russians at low prices and buy Russian goods in return at prices that are simply dictated; the Russians may then sell satellite products on the world market for huge profits. In 1947, Russia bought Polish coal for one dollar a ton when the world price was $15 to $16; and the index of Hungarian export prices to the Soviet Union was 47 per cent lower than the index of Hungary's export prices to other countries. After 1949, a curtain of secrecy descended over such transactions, but the Yugoslavs, after breaking with the Cominform, had much to tell about similar arrangements.

There is also a peculiar exchange of manpower: technicians, skilled workers, and laborers are forcibly exported to Russia; Russia sends her newly acquired "allies" instructors, supervisors, administrators, army commanders, and police chiefs, who not only "live on the country," but enjoy privileges and exact an obedience that old-fashioned colonial administrators could hardly dream of.

THUS the Soviet ruling class has very good economic reasons for seeking to expand its rule. But it has political reasons too—and these not primarily the classical strategic ones such as govern most nations' foreign policies. Quite simply, the existence of any relatively free country, regardless of how weak or small or miserable it may be, is a threat to the rulers of the Soviet Union. Soviet theoreticians have as much as admitted the fact. On August 16, 1951, the Moscow *Bolshevik*, the theoretical organ of the Soviet Communist party, answered a question put by a number of readers: Can we still speak of capitalist encirclement when we now rule, with China and the satellites, a third of the world? The answer begins: *"Capitalist encirclement is a political term. Comrade Stalin has stated that capitalist encirclement cannot be considered a geographic notion."*

The article proceeds to demonstrate that capitalist encirclement will last as long as there are *any* non-Soviet countries at all in the world, and that this is the reason why state power, an army, police, repression, all of which, according to Marx and Lenin, were supposed to "wither away," must be still maintained, even in the period of "complete Communism" that Russia will soon be entering. As long as one country is free, it "encircles" the Soviet world, and the dictatorship must therefore be maintained and strengthened.

This does not mean that the Soviet ruling class consciously invented the notion of "capitalist encirclement" in order to cover its predatory aims and deceive its subjects. The relation between what rulers believe and the real motives from which they act is complicated. Like many expansionists before them, Soviet bureaucrats probably believe just as sincerely in the reality of a worldwide conspiracy against them as they do in their own

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"civilizing mission." They must believe this, otherwise they would have to admit and try to understand that the contradictions of Soviet society which force it to seek relief by expansion are the necessary consequences of their own despotic rule. Not only must they refuse to admit this; it is doubtful whether they can even let themselves understand it. They cannot acknowledge that economic and social realities guide and constrain them—as they guide and constrain, *mutatis mutandis,* the capitalist world too. This is inconceivable to a new ruling class which, having concentrated all economic, political, and cultural power in its hands, feels that it ought to be able to change not only social relations but nature itself, and even past history. The bureaucrats were nurtured in the belief that they had made the leap from necessity to freedom by virtue of "the Revolution" and, more importantly, by virtue of the destined role of the class they represented. They had raised—and believed—such slogans as "There are no fortresses Bolsheviks cannot storm," or "Cadres decide everything."

"Cadres decide everything"—that famous slogan of Stalin has been quoted millions of times in Soviet Russia; it means you have only to select, instruct, and organize groups of resourceful, devoted, obedient men, and you can rule any large community, solve any problem. In other words, bureaucracy—especially when chosen by history itself—is omnipotent.

Obviously, the rulers of Soviet Russia have a mentality quite different from that of most statesmen in the West—or even of previous Russian statesmen. They believe that Russia has a superior social order—but its citizens have to be protected from all contact with other social orders, even if inferior, because such contact would corrupt them. They know that Soviet doctrine is the self-evident truth —but even the mere traces of other doctrines have to be eradicated because they would confuse and mislead the people. They boast that the ruling elite is incomparable for its wisdom and virtue—but every one of the members of that elite may be a foreign spy; and as a matter of fact, in the 30's, nine-tenths of the ruling cadres in Russia were condemned as traitors. The bureaucrat has to maintain and expand the "classless" society in which class enemies keep popping up from behind every bush, just as the greatest world power remains "encircled" so long as one free country is left. To defend the Soviet Union, the Stalinist must conquer the globe.

Expansionism is not an accidental feature of Soviet society. The czars might have felt content with the Straits; not so the present Communist regime, for which limitless expansion is a necessary product of its inner unsolved and unsolvable conflicts, economic, political, and psychological.

Two important ideological obstructions stood in the way of the development of a policy of naked Soviet expansionism: (1) the right of the self-determination of nations and (2) the belief in the complete equality of nations and national cultures—both of them hallowed fixtures in the intellectual sanctuary of Bolshevism.

The early Bolsheviks, before seizing power, asserted the right of self-determination to the point of declaring their readiness to permit any nation to secede from the Soviet Union; they did not, of course, look forward to the Balkanization of Russia, but hoped rather that the granting of the right of self-determination would lead to a voluntary union and eventually, after the inevitable world revolution, to the merging of all nations in a common, undifferentiated, socialist humanity. After Bolshevik rule was consolidated, however, the unqualified right of self-determination was given short shrift.

In October 1920, Stalin wrote that Soviet nations "had the inalienable right to secede from Russia," but that actually to do so had become "profoundly counter-revolutionary." At the tenth party congress in 1921, Stalin said that, since the various nations had joined the federation of Soviet republics "voluntarily," the right to secession "did not arise" any more. In 1923, at the twelfth party congress, he argued that "besides the right of self-determination there is also the right of

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the working class to consolidate its power and to this latter right self-determination is subordinate—it cannot be an obstacle to the right of the working class to its dictatorship."* The working class, of course, was represented by its most "conscious" representatives: the party and its Politburo.

The commitment to the equality of nations was harder to dispose of, and a certain degree of cultural freedom remained for the non-Russian minorities after the right of self-determination was interpreted out of existence. But the centralized regime of oppression and exploitation generated dissatisfaction and revolt, which in turn revived old, and created new, national tensions. Ukrainian peasants suffered famine and the atrocities of "de-kulakization" because of policies determined in Moscow. The decline in standards of living after the conquest of Georgia aroused nostalgia for independence and protests against foreign, i.e. Russian, rule. Social protest took the form of national resistance, and "nationalist deviations" spread like an epidemic. In the great purges of the 30's, all the vice-presidents of the Soviet Union elected from the non-Russian nationalities, almost every premier of a national republic, and most Communist party secretaries in the non-Russian regions perished, and Russian Communists were placed in key positions in the "autonomous" republics.

In World War II, millions of Ukrainians, Byelo-Russians, Crimean Tartars, and Caucasian mountaineers were so desperate that they were ready to greet anyone, even Hitler, as a liberator. When the Red Army reconquered their territories several minority republics were abolished and their populations deported or exterminated. Soviet nationality policy thus ended in genocidal measures.

THESE developments finally brought about an official revision of ideology. In a famous speech on May 24, 1945, Stalin declared that the Great Russians were the "most outstanding" nation of the Soviet Union. This sounded innocuous enough, and the apologists for Soviet policies did not fail to interpret it in terms of *primus inter pares*: all nationalities were still equal, the Great Russians were merely leading the others on the path of brotherly cooperation. But in the Soviet Union, as well as in Orwell's *Animal Farm,* to say that all animals are equal does not exclude the possibility that some animals are more equal than others. In Communist terminology, to lead means to dictate. The leader acts "in the interest of all," but has to be obeyed. And since, in Soviet Russia, almost any change in present attitudes automatically revises history, the leading role of the Great Russians was projected into the past.

The old czars and their generals again became objects of veneration, especially those among them, like Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, who organized, centralized, and expanded Moscovite rule. Among the historical figures of the non-Russian Soviet nationalities, only those were considered respectable who had helped to bring their country under Russian rule, as for example, the Ukrainian Hetman Chmielnicki, whose pogroms and anti-Jewish atrocities were not allowed to dim the glory of his achievements. On the other hand, national leaders who had fought against Russia, czarist or otherwise, became "reactionary." Books about the Kazakhstan hero, Kenesary Kasymov, were condemned because their authors "did not understand that the annexation of Kazakhstan by Russia was of profoundly progressive significance." And when the authors of the *History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan* confined themselves to the statement that Russian conquest of Central Asia "was of progressive significance," it was not enough. They had to "prove" that Russia saved the people from feudal decay and British imperialism.

In superimposing a Russian on a general Soviet chauvinism, the leaders of the Soviet Union, who after all come from different ethnic groups and are led by the Georgian Stalin, were certainly not motivated by any old-fashioned sentimental nationalist feelings. Almost against their will, the tensions be-

* For an excellent analysis of this transformation, see Solomon Schwarz's *The Jews in the Soviet Union,* a study sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (Syracuse University Press, 1951).

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tween national groups due to the social antagonisms generated by bureaucratic despotism led them to assert that the Russians were the empire-building, the minorities the empire-threatening, forces. It was not Russian nationalism which created Soviet imperialism. On the contrary: Soviet rule and Soviet imperialism resurrected Russian nationalism to act as a binder, because Russia was central, both in historical and geographical terms, to the complex of nations ruled from Moscow.

We may sum up the evolution of Soviet imperialism by describing three quite distinct, though partly overlapping, periods in its development:

The first period, from 1917 to 1925, saw the seizure of power and the emergence of the new bureaucratic ruling class, which went hand in hand with the substitution of autocratic for democratic methods in dealing with minority peoples and small foreign nations. But the expansion of Bolshevik rule proceeded under the banner of world revolution, to which the interests of the Soviet state were in theory subordinated. The main appeal was to revolutionary internationalism, not to Russian patriotism or nationalism.

In the second period, from 1925 to 1939, the Soviet ruling class secured its totalitarian rule in Russia, avoiding open conflicts with foreign powers but transforming Communist movements everywhere into docile fifth columns. "Defend the Soviet Union!" now became the central slogan; the interests of world revolution were declared identical with—in other words, subordinated to—the defense of Soviet power. Internationalism was replaced by Soviet patriotism.

The third period started in 1939, when a favorable international situation and the consolidation of the new order in Russia made expansion possible on a large scale, and the contradictions of the Soviet system at the same time made it more and more necessary. The new central idea was that of world domination by a hierarchically organized class of rulers directed from Moscow. "Russian nationalism" was revived as an instrument of Soviet imperialism; "world revolution" became a mere synonym for Soviet expansion.

Soviet imperialism is motivated *neither* by the interests of the "Russian nation" *nor* by the interests of "international Communism." Its driving force is *the interest of the Soviet bureaucratic regime*. For this reason, as the experiences of all the satellite countries have shown, the mere expansion of Russia's power and influence is not sufficient—its peculiar social order must be imposed everywhere, replacing previous social forms: only this can satisfy the needs of the Soviet bureaucracy. But, as the Yugoslavs know, the duplication of the Communist order is not enough: it must also be directed from Moscow.

What strategic conclusions flow from this analysis?

Totalitarian imperialism cannot stop expanding. It is a menace to the free world so long as it exists. A policy of containment, therefore, has efficacy only as a prelude, the first necessary condition of a policy whose real aim must be the disintegration of the totalitarian empire. Only by containment *and* disintegration of the totalitarian machine can war be avoided. The undermining of Communist rule is possible. There is no harmony of interests between the Soviet ruling class and the Russian people: imperialist expansion does not ease the oppression weighing on the Great Russians themselves—on the contrary, they pay dearly for militarism and armament. There is a harmony of interest between the Russian people and the subjugated nations of the Russian empire. A sound policy must, in the first place, appeal to this common interest. Both the Russians and the minority nations are potential allies of Western democracy against their present oppressors. And both are entitled to the same treatment and to the same promise: that they will have the right to decide their future for themselves in a democratic way.

The social and national cleavages in the Russian empire can be the driving forces towards its disintegration. These cleavages will begin to be felt strongly when Soviet expansion is stopped; they will gather momentum when its power is rolled back.

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GEORGE ORWELL AND THE POLITICS OF TRUTH

Portrait of the Intellectual as a Man of Virtue

LIONEL TRILLING

GEORGE ORWELL'S *Homage to Catalonia* is one of the important documents of our time. It is a very modest book—it seems to say the least that can be said on a subject of great magnitude. But in saying the least it says the most. Its manifest subject is a period of the Spanish Civil War, in which, for some months, until he was almost mortally wounded, its author fought as a soldier in the trenches. Everyone knows that the Spanish war was a decisive event of our epoch, everyone said so when it was being fought, and everyone was right. But the Spanish war lies a decade and a half behind us, and nowadays our sense of history is being destroyed by the nature of our history—our memory is short and it grows shorter under the rapidity of the assault of events. What once occupied all our minds and filled the musty meeting halls with the awareness of heroism and destiny has now become chiefly a matter for the historical scholar. George Orwell's book would make only a limited claim upon our attention if it were nothing more than a record of personal experiences in the Spanish war. But it is much more than this. It is a testimony to the nature of modern political life. It is also a demonstration on the part of its author of one of the right ways of confronting that life. Its importance is therefore of the present moment and for years to come.

A politics which is presumed to be available to everyone is a relatively new thing in the world. We do not yet know very much about it. Nor have most of us been especially eager to learn. In a politics presumed to be available to everyone, ideas and ideals play a great part. And those of us who set store by ideas and ideals have never been quite able to learn that just because they do have power nowadays, there is a direct connection between their power and another kind of power, the old, unabashed, cynical power of force. We are always being surprised by this. Communism's record of the use of unregenerate force was perfectly clear years ago, but many of us found it impossible to admit this because Communism spoke boldly to our love of ideas and ideals. We tried as hard as we could to believe that politics might be an idyl, only to discover that what we took to be a political pastoral was really a grim military campaign or a murderous betrayal of political allies—or that what we insisted on calling agrarianism was in actuality a new imperialism. And in the personal life what was undertaken by many good people as a moral commitment of the most disinterested kind turned out to be an engagement to an ultimate immorality. The evidence of this is to be found in a whole literary genre with which we have become familiar in the last decade, the personal confession of involvement and then of disillusionment with Communism.

Orwell's book, in one of its most significant aspects, is about disillusionment with Communism, but it is not a confession. I say this because it is one of the important

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FEW writers in the English-speaking world have written more penetratingly than LIONEL TRILLING on the problems of culture, art, and morality in our time. It is of the problem of virtue—how a man may be good in an age of intellectual double-dealing and failure of conscience—that he writes here, taking as his point of departure the life and work of "a man of virtue": George Orwell. This essay was written as an introduction to a new edition of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia,* to be brought out next month by Harcourt, Brace. Mr. Trilling's books include *Matthew Arnold* (1939), *E. M. Forster* (1943), *The Middle of the Journey,* a novel (1947), and *The Liberal Imagination* (1950).

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positive things to say about *Homage to Catalonia,* but my saying it does not imply that I share the *a priori* antagonistic feelings of many people toward those books which, on the basis of experience, expose and denounce the Communist party. About such books people of liberal inclination often make uneasy and rather vindictive jokes. The jokes seem to me unfair and in bad taste. There is nothing shameful in the nature of these books. There is a good chance that the commitment to Communism was made in the first place for generous reasons, and it is certain that the revulsion was brought by more than sufficient causes. And clearly there is nothing wrong in wishing to record the painful experience and to draw conclusions from it. Nevertheless, human nature being what it is—and in the uneasy readers of such books as well as in the unhappy writers of them—it is a fact that public confession does often appear in an unfortunate light, that its moral tone is less simple and true than we might wish it to be. But the moral tone of Orwell's book is uniquely simple and true. Orwell's ascertaining of certain political facts was not the occasion for a change of heart, or for a crisis of the soul. What he learned from his experiences in Spain of course pained him very much, and it led him to change his course of conduct. But it did not destroy him, it did not, as people say, cut the ground from under him. It did not shatter his faith in what he had previously believed, nor weaken his political impulse, nor even change its direction. It produced not a moment of guilt or self-recrimination.

Perhaps this should not seem so very remarkable. Yet who can doubt that it constitutes in our time a genuine moral triumph? It suggests that Orwell was an unusual kind of man, that he had a temper of mind and heart which is now rare, although we still respond to it when we see it. About this person and the temper of his mind and heart a word ought to be said.

IT HAPPENED by a curious chance that on the day I agreed to write the introduction to the new edition of *Homage to Catalonia,* and indeed at the very moment that I was reaching for the telephone to tell the publisher that I would write it, a young man, a graduate student of mine, came in to see me, the purpose of his visit being to ask what I thought about his doing an essay on George Orwell. My answer, naturally, was ready, and when I had given it and we had been amused and pleased by the coincidence, he settled down for some chat about our common subject. But I asked him not to talk about Orwell. I didn't want to dissipate in talk what ideas I had, and also I didn't want my ideas crossed with his, which were sure to be very good. So for a while we merely exchanged bibliographical information, asking each other which of Orwell's books we had read and which we owned. But then, as if he could not resist making at least one remark about Orwell himself, he said suddenly in a very simple and matter-of-fact way, "He was a virtuous man." And we sat there, agreeing at length about this statement, finding pleasure in talking about it.

It was an odd statement for a young man to make nowadays, and I suppose that what we found so interesting about it was just this oddity—its point was in its being an old-fashioned thing to say. It was archaic in its bold commitment of sentiment, and it used an archaic word in an archaic simplicity. Our pleasure was not merely literary, not just a response to the remark's being so appropriate to Orwell, in whom there was indeed a quality of an earlier day. We were glad to be able to say it about anybody. One doesn't have the opportunity very often. Not that there are not many men who are good, but there are few men who, in addition to being good, have the simplicity and sturdiness and activity which allow us to say it about them, for somehow to say that a man "is good," or even to speak of a man who "is virtuous," is not the same thing as saying, "He is a virtuous man." By some quirk of the spirit of the language, the form of that sentence brings out the primitive meaning of the word virtuous, which is not merely moral goodness, but fortitude and strength.

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Orwell, by reason of the quality that permits us to say of him that he was a virtuous man, is a figure in our lives. He was not a genius, and this is one of the remarkable things about him. His not being a genius is an element of the quality that makes him what I am calling a figure.

It has been some time since we in America have had literary figures—men who live their visions as well as write them, who *are* what they write, whom we think of as standing for something as men because of what they have written in their books. They preside, as it were, over certain ideas and attitudes. Mark Twain was in this sense a figure for us, and so was William James. So too were Thoreau, and Whitman, and Henry Adams, and Henry James, although posthumously and rather uncertainly. But when in our more recent literature the writer is anything but anonymous, he is likely to be ambiguous and unsatisfactory as a figure, like Sherwood Anderson, or Mencken, or Wolfe, or Dreiser. There is something about the American character that does not take to the idea of the figure as the English character does. In this regard, the English are closer to the French than to us. Whatever the legend to the contrary, the English character is more strongly marked than ours, less reserved, less ironic, more open in its expression of wilfulness and eccentricity and cantankerousness. Its manners are cruder and bolder. It is a demonstrative character—it shows itself, even shows off. Santayana, when he visited England, quite gave up the common notion that Dickens's characters are caricatures. One can still meet an English snob so thunderingly shameless in his worship of the aristocracy, so explicit and demonstrative in his adoration, that a careful, modest, ironic American snob would be quite bewildered by him. And in modern English literature there have been many writers whose lives were demonstrations of the principles which shaped their writing. They lead us to be aware of the moral personalities that stand behind the work. The two Lawrences, different as they were, were alike in this, that they assumed the roles of their belief and acted them out on the stage of the world. In different ways this was true of Yeats, and of Shaw, and even of Wells. It is true of T. S. Eliot, for all that he has spoken against the claims of personality in literature. Even E. M. Forster, who makes so much of privacy, acts out in public the role of the private man, becoming for us the very spirit of the private life. He is not merely a writer, he is a figure.

ORWELL takes his place with these men as a figure. In one degree or another they are geniuses, and he is not—if we ask what it is he stands for, what he is the figure of, the answer is: the virtue of not being a genius, of fronting the world with nothing more than one's simple, direct, undeceived intelligence, and a respect for the powers one does have, and the work one undertakes to do. We admire geniuses, we love them, but they discourage us. They are great concentrations of intellect and emotion, we feel that they have soaked up all the available power, monopolizing it and leaving none for us. We feel that if we cannot be as they, we can be nothing. Beside them we are so plain, so hopelessly threadbare. How they glitter, and with what an imperious way they seem to deal with circumstances, even when they are wrong. Lacking their patents of nobility, we might as well quit. This is what democracy has done to us, alas—told us that genius is available to anyone, that the grace of ultimate prestige may be had by anyone, that we may all be princes and potentates, or saints and visionaries and holy martyrs of the heart and mind. And then when it turns out that we are no such thing, it permits us to think that we aren't much of anything at all. In contrast with this cozening trick of democracy, how pleasant seems the old, reactionary Anglican phrase that used to drive people of democratic leanings quite wild with rage—"My station and its duties."

Orwell would very likely have loathed that phrase, but in a way he exemplifies its meaning. And it is a great relief, a fine sight, to see him doing this. His novels are good, quite good, some better than others, some of them surprising us by being so very much

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better than their modest genre leads us to suppose they can be, all of them worth reading; but they are clearly not the work of a great or even of a "born" novelist. In my opinion, his satire on Stalinism, *Animal Farm,* was overrated—I think people were carried away by someone's reviving systematic satire for serious political purposes. His critical essays are almost always very fine, but sometimes they do not meet the demands of their subject, as, for example, the essay on Dickens. And even when they are at their best, they seem to have become what they are chiefly by reason of the very plainness of Orwell's mind, his simple ability to look at things in a downright, undeceived way. He seems to be serving not some dashing *daimon* but the plain, solid Gods of the Copybook Maxims. He is not a genius—what a relief! What an encouragement. For he communicates to us the sense that what he has done any one of us could do.

Or could do if we but made up our mind to do it, if we but surrendered a little of the cant that comforts us, if for a few weeks we paid no attention to the little group with which we habitually exchange opinions, if we took our chance of being wrong or inadequate, if we looked at things simply and directly, having only in mind our intention of finding out what they really are, not the prestige of our great intellectual act of looking at them. He liberates us. He tells us that we can understand our political and social life merely by looking around us, he frees us from the need for the inside dope. He implies that our job is not to be intellectual, certainly not to be intellectual in this fashion or that, but merely to be intelligent according to our lights—he restores the old sense of the democracy of the mind, releasing us from the belief that the mind can work only in a technical, professional way and that it must work competitively. He has the effect of making us believe that we may become full members of the society of thinking men. That is why he is a figure for us.

In speaking thus of Orwell, I do not mean to imply that his birth was attended only by the Gods of the Copybook Maxims and not at all by the good fairies, or that he had no *daimon.* The good fairies gave him very fine free gifts indeed. And he had a strong *daimon,* but it was of an old-fashioned kind and it constrained him to the paradox—for such it is in our time—of taking seriously the Gods of the Copybook Maxims and putting his gifts at their service. Orwell responded to truths of more than one kind, to the bitter, erudite truths of the modern time as well as to the older and simpler truths. He would have quite understood what Karl Jaspers means when he recommends the "decision to renounce the absolute claims of the European humanistic spirit, to think of it as a stage of development rather than the living content of faith." But he was not interested in this development. What concerned him was survival, which he connected with the old simple ideas that are often not ideas at all but beliefs, preferences, and prejudices. In the modern world these had for him the charm and audacity of newly discovered truths. Involved as so many of us are, at least in our literary lives, in a bitter metaphysics of human nature, it shocks and dismays us when Orwell speaks in praise of such things as responsibility, order in the personal life, fair play, physical courage—even of snobbery and hypocrisy because they help to shore up the crumbling ramparts of the moral life.

It is hard to find personalities in the contemporary world who are analogous to Orwell. We have to look for men who have considerable intellectual power but who are not happy in the institutionalized life of intellectuality; who have a feeling for an older and simpler time, and a guiding awareness of the ordinary life of the people, yet without any touch of the sentimental malice of populism; and a strong feeling for the commonplace; and a direct, unabashed sense of the nation, even a conscious love of it. This brings Péguy to mind, and also Chesterton, and I think that Orwell does have an affinity with these men—he was probably unaware of it—which tells us something about him. But Péguy has been dead nearly forty years, and Chesterton (it is a pity) is

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at the moment rather dim for us, even for Catholics. And of course Orwell's affinity with these men is limited by their Catholicism, for although Orwell admired some of the effects and attitudes of religion, he seems to have had no religious tendency in his nature, or none that went beyond what used to be called natural piety.

In some ways he seems more the contemporary of William Cobbett and William Hazlitt than of any man of our own century. Orwell's radicalism, like Cobbett's, refers to the past and to the soil. This is not uncommon nowadays in the social theory of literary men, but in Orwell's attitude there is none of the implied aspiration to aristocracy which so often marks literary agrarian theory; his feeling for the land and the past simply served to give his radicalism a conservative —a conserving—cast, which is in itself attractive, and to protect his politics from the ravages of ideology. Like Cobbett, he does not dream of a new kind of man, he is content with the old kind, and what moves him is the desire that this old kind of man should have freedom, food, and proper work. He had the passion for the literal actuality of life as it is really lived which makes Cobbett's *Rural Rides* a classic, although a forgotten one; his own *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Down and Out in Paris and London* are in its direct line. And it is not the least interesting detail in the similarity of the two men that both had a love affair with the English language. Cobbett, the self-educated agricultural laborer and sergeant major, was said by one of his enemies to handle the language better than anyone of his time, and he wrote a first-rate handbook of grammar and rhetoric; Orwell was obsessed by the deterioration of the English language in the hands of the journalists and pundits, and nothing in his *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is more memorable than his creation of Newspeak.

Orwell's affinity with Hazlitt is, I suspect, of a more intimate temperamental kind, although I cannot go beyond the suspicion, for I know much less about Orwell as a person than about Hazlitt. But there is an unquestionable similarity in their intellectual temper which leads them to handle their political and literary opinions in much the same way. Hazlitt remained a Jacobin all his life, but his unshakable opinions never kept him from giving credit when it was deserved by a writer of the opposite persuasion, and not merely out of chivalry but out of respect for the truth. He was the kind of passionate democrat who could question whether democracy could possibly produce great poetry, and his essays on, say, Scott and Coleridge prepare us for Orwell on Yeats and Kipling.

THE old-fashionedness of Orwell's temperament can be partly explained by the nature of his relation to his class. This was by no means simple. He came from that part of the middle class whose sense of its status is disproportionate to its income, his father having been a subordinate officer in the Civil Service of India, where Orwell was born. (The family name was Blair, and Orwell was christened Eric Hugh; he changed his name, for rather complicated reasons, when he began to write.) As a scholarship boy he attended the expensive preparatory school of which Cyril Connolly has given an account in *Enemies of Promise*. Orwell appears there as the school "rebel" and "intellectual." He was later to write of the absolute misery of the poor boy at a snobbish school. He went to Eton on a scholarship, and from Eton to Burma, where he served in the Police. He has spoken with singular honesty of the ambiguousness of his attitude in the imperialist situation. He disliked authority and the manner of its use, and he sympathized with the natives; yet at the same time he saw the need for authority and he used it, and he was often exasperated by the natives. When he returned to England on leave after five years of service, he could not bring himself to go back to Burma. It was at this time that, half voluntarily, he sank to the lower depths of poverty. This adventure in extreme privation was partly forced upon him, but partly it was undertaken to expiate the social guilt which, he felt, he had incurred in Burma. The experience seems to have done what was required of it. A year as a

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casual worker and vagrant had the effect of discharging Orwell's guilt, leaving him with an attitude toward the working class that was entirely affectionate and perfectly without sentimentality.

His experience of being declassed, and the effect which it had, go far toward defining the intellectual quality of Orwell and the particular work he was to do. In the 30's the middle-class intellectuals made it a moral fashion to avow their guilt toward the lower classes and to repudiate their own class tradition. So far as this was nothing more than a moral fashion, it was a moral anomaly. And although no one can read history without being made aware of what were the grounds of this attitude, yet the personal claim to a historical guilt yields but an ambiguous principle of personal behavior, a still more ambiguous basis of thought. Orwell broke with much of what the English upper middle class was and admired. But his clear, uncanting mind saw that, although the morality of history might come to harsh conclusions about the middle class and although the practicality of history might say that its day was over, there yet remained the considerable residue of its genuine virtues. The love of personal privacy, of order, of manners, the ideal of fairness and responsibility —these are very simple virtues indeed and they scarcely constitute perfection either of the personal or the social life. Yet they still might serve to judge the present and to control the future.

Orwell could even admire the virtues of the lower middle class, which an intelligentsia always finds it easiest to despise. His remarkable novel, *Keep the Aspidistra Flying,* is a *summa* of all the criticisms of a commercial civilization that have ever been made, and it is a detailed demonstration of the bitter and virtually hopeless plight of the lower-middle-class man. Yet it insists that to live even in this plight is not without its stubborn joy. Péguy spoke of "fathers of families, those heroes of modern life"—Orwell's novel celebrates this biological-social heroism by leading its mediocre, middle-aging poet from the depths of splenetic negation to the acknowledgment of the happiness of fatherhood, thence to an awareness of the pleasures of marriage, and of an existence which, while it does not gratify his ideal conception of himself, is nevertheless his own. There is a dim, elegiac echo of Defoe and of the early days of the middle-class ascendancy as Orwell's sad young man learns to cherish the small personal gear of life, his own bed and chairs and saucepans—his own aspidistra, the ugly, stubborn, organic emblem of survival.

We may say that it was on his affirmation of the middle-class virtues that Orwell based his criticism of the liberal intelligentsia. The characteristic error of the middle-class intellectual of modern times is his tendency to abstractness and absoluteness, his reluctance to connect idea with fact, especially with personal fact. I cannot recall that Orwell ever related his criticism to the implications of *Keep the Aspidistra Flying,* but he might have done so, for the prototypical act of the modern intellectual is his abstracting himself from the life of the family. We have yet to understand the thaumaturgical way in which we conceive of intellectuality. At least at the beginning of our intellectual careers we are like nothing so much as those young members of Indian tribes who have had a vision or a dream which confers power in exchange for the withdrawal from the ordinary life of the tribe. Or we are like the errant youngest son who is kind to some creature on his travels and receives in reward a magical object. By intellectuality we are freed from the thralldom to the familial commonplace, from the materiality and concreteness by which it exists, the hardness of the cash and the hardness of getting it, the inelegance and intractability of family things. It gives us power over intangibles, such as Beauty and Justice, and it permits us to escape the cosmic ridicule which in our youth we suppose is inevitably directed at those who take seriously the small concerns of this world, which we know to be inadequate and doomed by the very fact that it is so absurdly *conditioned*—by things, habits,

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local and temporary customs, and the foolish errors and solemn absurdities of the men of the past.

The gist of Orwell's criticism of the liberal intelligentsia was that they refused to understand the conditioned nature of life. He never quite puts it in this way but this is what he means. He himself knew what war and revolution were really like, what government and administration were really like. From first-hand experience he knew what Communism was. He could truly imagine what Nazism was. At a time when most intellectuals still thought of politics as a nightmare abstraction, pointing to the fearfulness of the nightmare as evidence of their sense of reality, Orwell was using the imagination of a man whose hands and eyes and whole body were part of his thinking apparatus. Shaw had insisted upon remaining sublimely unaware of the Russian actuality; Wells had pooh-poohed the threat of Hitler and had written off as anachronisms the very forces that were at the moment shaping the world—racial pride, leader-worship, religious belief, patriotism, love of war. These men had trained the political intelligence of the intelligentsia, who now, in their love of abstractions, in their wish to repudiate the anachronisms of their own emotions, could not conceive of directing upon Russia anything like the same stringency of criticism they used upon their own nation. Orwell had the simple courage to point out that the pacifists preached their doctrine under condition of the protection of the British navy, and that, against Germany and Russia, Gandhi's passive resistance would have been of no avail.

HE NEVER abated his anger against the established order. But a paradox of history had made the old British order one of the still beneficent things in the world, and it licensed the possibility of a social hope that was being frustrated and betrayed almost everywhere else. And so Orwell clung with a kind of wry, grim pride to the old ways of the last class that had ruled the old order. He must sometimes have wondered how it came about that he should be praising sportsmanship and gentlemanliness and dutifulness and physical courage. He seems to have thought, and very likely he was right, that they might come in handy as revolutionary virtues—he remarks of Rubashov, the central character of Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon,* that he was firmer in loyalty to the revolution than certain of his comrades because he had, and they had not, a bourgeois past. Certainly the virtues he praised were those of survival, and they had fallen into disrepute in a disordered world.

Sometimes in his quarrel with the intelligentsia, Orwell seems to sound like a leader-writer for the *Times* in a routine wartime attack on the highbrows:

> . . . The general weakening of imperialism, and to some extent of the whole British morale, that took place during the nineteen thirties, was partly the work of the left-wing intelligentsia, itself a kind of growth that sprouted from the stagnation of the Empire.
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> The mentality of the English left-wing intelligentsia can be studied in half a dozen weekly and monthly papers. The immediately striking thing about all these papers is their generally negative querulous attitude, their complete lack at all times of any constructive suggestion. There is little in them except the irresponsible carping of people who have never been and never expect to be in a position of power.
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> During the past twenty years the negative faineant outlook which has been fashionable among the English left-wingers, the sniggering of the intellectuals at patriotism and physical courage, the persistent effort to chip away at English morale and spread a hedonistic, what-do-I-get-out-of-it attitude to life, has done nothing but harm.

But he was not a leader-writer for the *Times.* He had fought in Spain and nearly died there, and on Spanish affairs his position had been the truly revolutionary one. The passages I have quoted are from his pamphlet, *The Lion and the Unicorn,* a persuasive statement of the case for socialism in Britain.

Toward the end of his life Orwell dis-

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covered another reason for his admiration of the old middle-class virtues and his criticism of the intelligentsia. Walter Bagehot used to speak of the political advantages of *stupidity*, meaning by the word a concern for one's own private material interests as a political motive which was preferable to an intellectual, theoretical interest. Orwell, it may be said, came to respect the old bourgeois virtues because they were stupid—that is, because they resisted the power of abstract ideas. And he came to love things, material possessions, for the same reason. He did not in the least become what is called "anti-intellectual," but he began to fear that the commitment to abstract ideas could be far more maleficent than the commitment to the gross materiality of property had ever been. The very stupidity of things has something human about it, something meliorative, something even liberating. Together with the stupidity of the old unthinking virtues it stands against the ultimate and absolute power which the unconditioned idea can develop. The essential point of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is just this, the danger of the ultimate and absolute power which mind can develop when it frees itself from conditions, from the bondage of things and history.

But this, as I say, is a late aspect of Orwell's criticism of intellectuality. Through the greater part of his literary career his criticism was simpler and less extreme. It was as simple as this: that intellectuals did not think and that they did not really love the truth.

In 1937 Orwell went to Spain to observe the civil war and to write about it. He stayed to take part in it, joining the militia as a private. At that time each of the parties still had its own militia units, although these were in process of being absorbed into the People's Army. Because his letters of introduction were from people of a certain political group in England, the ILP, which had connections with the POUM, Orwell joined a unit of that party in Barcelona. He was not at the time sympathetic to the views of his comrades and their leaders. During the days of inter-party strife, the POUM was represented in Spain and abroad as being a Trotskyist party. In point of fact it was not, although it did join with the small Trotskyist party to oppose certain of the policies of the dominant Communist party. Orwell's own preference, at the time of his enlistment, was for the Communist party line, and because of this he looked forward to an eventual transfer to a Communist unit.

It was natural, I think, for Orwell to have been a partisan of the Communist program for the war. It recommended itself to most people on inspection by its apparent simple common sense. It proposed to fight the war without any reference to any particular political idea beyond a defense of democracy from a fascist enemy. Then, when the war was won, the political and social problems would be solved, but until the war should be won, any dissension over these problems could only weaken the united front against Franco.

Eventually Orwell came to understand that this was not the practical policy he had at first thought it to be. His reasons need not be reiterated here—he gives them with characteristic cogency and modesty in the course of his book, and under the gloomy but probably correct awareness that, the condition of Spain being what it is, even the best policies must issue in some form of dictatorship. In sum, he believed that the war was revolutionary or nothing, and that the people of Spain would not fight and die for a democracy which was admittedly a bourgeois democracy.

But Orwell's disaffection from the Communist party was not the result of a difference of opinion over whether the revolution should be instituted during the war or after it. It was the result of his discovery that the Communist party's real intention was to prevent the revolution from ever being instituted at all—"The thing for which the Communists were working was not to postpone the Spanish revolution till a more suitable time, but to make sure it never happened." The movement of events, led by the Com-

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munists, who had the prestige and the supplies of Russia, was always to the right, and all protest was quieted by the threat that the war would be lost if the ranks were broken, which in effect meant that Russian supplies would be withheld if the Communist lead was not followed. Meanwhile the war was being lost because the government more and more distrusted the non-Communist militia units, particularly those of the Anarchists. "I have described," Orwell writes, "how we were armed, or not armed, on the Aragon front. There is very little doubt that arms were deliberately withheld lest too many of them should get into the hands of the Anarchists, who would afterwards use them for a revolutionary purpose; consequently, the big Aragon offensive which would have made Franco draw back from Bilbao and possibly from Madrid, never happened."

At the end of April, after three months on the Aragon front, Orwell was sent to Barcelona on furlough. He observed the change in morale that had taken place since the days of his enlistment—Barcelona was no longer the revolutionary city it had been. The heroic days were over. The militia, which had done such heroic service at the beginning of the war, was now being denigrated in favor of the People's Army, and its members were being snubbed as seeming rather queer in their revolutionary ardor, not to say dangerous. The tone of the black market and of privilege had replaced the old idealistic puritanism of even three months earlier. Orwell observed this but drew no conclusions from it. He wanted to go to the front at Madrid, and in order to do so he would have to be transferred to the International Column, which was under the control of the Communists. He had no objection to serving in a Communist command and, indeed, had resolved to make the transfer. But he was tired and in poor health and he waited to conclude the matter until another week of his leave should be up. While he delayed, the fighting broke out in Barcelona.

In New York and in London the intelligentsia knew what had happened. The Anarchists, together with the "Trotskyist" POUM—so it was said—had been secreting great stores of arms with a view to an uprising that would force upon the government their premature desire for collectivization. And on the third of May their plans were realized when they came out into the streets and captured the Telephone Exchange, thus breaking the united front in an extreme manner and endangering the progress of the war. But Orwell in Barcelona saw nothing like this. He was under the orders of the POUM, but he was not committed to its line, and certainly not to the Anarchist line, and he was sufficiently sympathetic to the Communists to wish to join one of their units. What he saw he saw as objectively as a man might ever see anything. And what he records is now, I believe, accepted as the essential truth by everyone whose judgment is worth regarding. There were no great stores of arms cached by the Anarchists and the POUM—there was an actual shortage of arms in their ranks. But the Communist-controlled government had been building up the strength of the Civil Guard, a gendarmerie which was called "non-political" and from which workers were excluded. That there had indeed been mounting tension between the government and the dissident forces is beyond question, but the actual fighting had been touched off by acts of provocation committed by the government itself—shows of military strength, the call to all private persons to give up arms, attacks on Anarchist centers, and, as a climax, the attempt to take over the Telephone Exchange, which since the beginning of the war had been run by the Anarchists.

It would have been very difficult to learn anything of this in New York or London. Those periodicals which guided the thought of left-liberal intellectuals knew nothing of it, and had no wish to learn. As for the aftermath of the unhappy uprising, they appeared to have no knowledge of that at all. When Barcelona was again quiet—some six thousand Assault Guards were imported to quell the disturbance—Orwell returned to his old front. There he was severely wounded,

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shot through the neck; the bullet just missed the windpipe. After his grim hospitalization, of which he writes so lightly, he was invalided to Barcelona. He returned to find the city in process of being purged. The POUM and the Anarchists had been suppressed; the power of the workers had been broken and the police hunt was on. The jails were already full and daily becoming fuller—the most devoted fighters for Spanish freedom, men who had given up everything for the cause, were being imprisoned under the most dreadful conditions, often held incommunicado, often never to be heard of again. Orwell himself was suspect and in danger because he had belonged to a POUM regiment, and he stayed in hiding until, with the help of the British consul, he was able to escape to France. But if one searches the liberal periodicals, which have made the cause of civil liberties their own, one can find no mention of this terror. They were committed not to the fact but to the abstraction.

And to the abstraction they remained committed for a long time to come. Many are still committed to it, or nostalgically wish they could be. If only life were not so tangible, so concrete, so made up of facts that are at variance with each other; if only the things that people said were good were really good; if only the things that are pretty good were entirely good; if only politics were not a matter of power—then we should be happy to put our minds to politics, then we should consent to think!

But Orwell had never believed that the political life could be an intellectual idyl. He immediately put his mind to the politics he had experienced. He told the truth, and told it in an exemplary way, quietly, simply, with due warning to the reader that it was only one man's truth. He used no political jargon, and he made no recriminations. He made no effort to show that his heart was in the right place, or the left place. He was not interested in where his heart might be thought to be, since he knew where it was. He was interested only in telling the truth. Not very much attention was paid to his truth—*Homage to Catalonia* sold poorly in England, it had to be remaindered, it was not published in America, and the people to whom it should have said most responded to it not at all.

Its particular truth refers to events now far in the past, as in these days we reckon our past. It does not matter the less for that—this particular truth implies a general truth which, we now cannot fail to understand, will matter for a long time to come. And what matters most of all is our sense of the man who tells the truth.

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"CIVIL LIBERTIES," 1952—A STUDY IN CONFUSION

Do We Defend Our Rights by Protecting Communists?

IRVING KRISTOL

Heard ye not lately of a man
That went beside his witt,
And naked through the citty rann
Wrapt in a frantique fitt?

THE above tantalizing bit of 17th-century verse was quoted recently in the London *Times Literary Supplement,* in the same issue in which there appeared, elsewhere in its pages, a review of the English edition of Alan Barth's *The Loyalty of Free Men.* This fortuitous juxtaposition was not without its ironic relevance, Mr. Barth's book having been provoked by the "frantique fitt" of McCarthyism, beneath which he saw a cool and calculating assault on the American democracy, and his defense being couched in a cool and calculating eloquence that turns out, upon close examination, to be not nearly the exercise in pure reason it seems.

A close examination, however, Mr. Barth's book and others of its kind have not received. It was hardly to be expected from Senator McCarthy and his friends, who are less famous for their habits of meticulous reading than for their preference for arguing in the large, while the more scholarly sections of American opinion have been so delighted to see the Senator get his, and so soothed by the cadences of a familiar tone, that they have not so much read these books as permitted themselves to be enchanted by them. This enchantment has had its political sequel, for as a result of it there has been drawn a line of battle. On the one side are the men of intellect and sensibility, fair-minded and generous-hearted and confessedly not infallible: the Alan Barths, the Henry Steele Commagers, the Zechariah Chafees, the Howard Mumford Joneses, the Ralph Barton Perrys, the William O. Douglases, and, rather more tentatively committed, the Francis Biddles. On the other side are the mindless men, the kind who get elected to office when the spirit of the age reverts to primitivism, and who wish, under cover of fighting Communism, to squeeze the nation into a Know-Nothing straitjacket.

The line is drawn—and those liberals who have rallied to their positions on the left of it find themselves ever more pressed against the outer walls of the city. The ready quotations from Jefferson about the trees of liberty and the blood of tyrants, the sonorous repetition of Justice Holmes' dissenting opinions, the schoolmaster's measured accents alternating with prophetic indignation—the whole battery has failed significantly to make an impression on the dominant American mood. Senator McCarthy remains blithely on the offensive and his critics give ground before him. It is a most exasperating and melancholy situation for liberals to be in; yet in proportion as they fail in strength, they gain in their sense of petulant righteousness.

Is it conceivable that the line was incorrectly drawn in the first place? The liberals are loath to weigh the possibility lest it give comfort to the enemy; Senator McCarthy for

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AMONG the devilishly complex problems that Communism has forced on America is the one of protecting American institutions from Communist infiltration without at the same time defeating our own traditions of civil liberty. Many thoughtful liberals, themselves immune from all suspicion of Communist sympathies, are of the opinion that an anti-Communist hysteria has already reached dangerous proportions, and they have argued their case in eloquent books and articles that have aroused national attention. Here, IRVING KRISTOL, managing editor of COMMENTARY, examines their arguments, finding in them certain constant assumptions and modes of reasoning likely to aggravate, rather than alleviate, an inflamed situation. In future issues, ample space will be accorded those views which Mr. Kristol criticizes.

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his part has no cause for dissatisfaction with things as they are; but those of us who are the displaced persons of this war might reflect on this question to our advantage. Perhaps it is a calamitous error to believe that because a vulgar demagogue lashes out at both Communism and liberalism as identical, it is necessary to protect Communism in order to defend liberalism. This way of putting the matter will surely shock liberals, who are convinced that it is only they who truly understand Communism and who thoughtfully oppose it. They are nonetheless mistaken, and it is a mistake on which McCarthyism waxes fat. For there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy: he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing. And with some justification.

WITH what justification, can be seen from an illustrative incident involving Professor Henry Steele Commager, a distinguished historian who never was a Communist and never will be. In the May 1947 issue of *Harper's*, Professor Commager wrote a spirited article that began as follows:

"On May 6 a Russian-born girl, Mrs. Shura Lewis, gave a talk to the students of the Western High School of Washington, D. C. She talked about Russia—its school system, its public health program, the position of women, of the aged, of the workers, the farmers, and the professional classes—and compared, superficially and uncritically, some American and Russian institutions. . . . Mrs. Lewis said nothing that had not been said a thousand times, in speeches, in newspapers, magazines and books. She said nothing that any normal person could find objectionable."

What greatly disturbed Professor Commager was that this inoffensive speech did give rise to a furor in Washington. Congressmen bellowed that our schools were being subverted, the principal of the school came forward with a humble apology, the superintendent of schools for the nation's capital swore it would never happen again, and the speech itself was reprinted (after some discussion of the wisdom of exposing the public to inflammation) in the Congressional Record as a horrible example. Professor Commager saw in this a reflection of an anti-Communist hysteria that threatened to engulf all civil liberties, and he pleaded earnestly that reason control the anti-Communist passion, lest we find ourselves saddled with an anti-Communist orthodoxy no less reprehensible than the Communist one. His article was hailed as a kind of liberal manifesto, and was reprinted—alongside John Stuart Mill and John Milton—in Howard Mumford Jones' *Primer of Intellectual Freedom* (1949). Evil won a transient victory in the seats of power and Good won a permanent niche in the anthologies—a familiar tale.

Familiar, that is, until one goes to the Congressional Record and reads through this speech that no "normal person could find objectionable." Mrs. Lewis' English was broken, but her sentiments were whole:

"They call it collective farm—the peasants farm and divide up products according to work put in by each individual during the years. As a result of planning, unemployment is completely wiped out. . . .

"In Russia right now people absolutely do not worry about today or tomorrow. They never think 'All of a sudden I lose a job.' That fear doesn't exist among Russian people. . . .

"No matter where you live you have to work. What the Russian people have, they are more secure about this. They work. They need not worry much about losing the job. They are free to travel from one place to another, and each person must work 25 years for after that he is able to get a pension. No matter where you work—in this plant or another, 25 years and then you get 50% of your salary and live the rest of your life. : . .

"I never appreciated the life in Russia until I live here. Here you have to work hard in order to live, use all your courage not to die. . . .

"I read all the papers here and occasionally I go to the Library of Congress and read all papers printed in Moscow. It is very in-

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teresting, and when I read these papers always you can see here evidence of press where people talk all the time about having a war, to throw the atomic bomb on Russia, to destroy because they have a system which is very prideful. At the present time Russians are busy to restore all those houses, all those cities, all those towns. Russian people make streets, plants, produce new style of shoes, new fashion of dress, new production, and never they talk about having a war."

THE echoes this awakened in Congress may have been exaggerated, but they were not factitious or beside the point. Obviously, Professor Commager can argue that it will not harm American school children to encounter an occasional Communist apologist in the flesh; one may even go further and say it would do them good. However, in the first place, Mrs. Lewis was not introduced as a Communist apologist but as an informed reporter, and, in the second place, everything she said should have been objectionable to every normal person, and especially to a historian like Professor Commager —for the good and sufficient reason that it was a tissue of lies. For Professor Commager to defend the rights of Communists to free speech is one thing, for him to assert that there is nothing objectionable in mendacious pleading in support of Communism is quite another. The conclusion "any normal person" will draw from such behavior is that, for whatever reason, his critical faculties are less alert when he looks out of the left corner of his eye.

Indeed, the heart of the matter is exactly that he looks at Communism out of the *left* corner of his eye. Professor Commager seems to be seduced by the insidious myth according to which Communism is a political trend continuous with liberalism and democratic socialism, only more impatient and inclined to the fanatical, only more "radical" than its companions who are not quite so "left." It is a myth that Senator McCarthy, for his own ends, is happy to accept, since it allows him to tag a New Dealer as being by nature an embryonic Communist. Neither the Professor nor the Senator is concerned to see that the antithesis of "left" and "right" no longer suits the political realities; that measured by the ideals of the French or even Russian Revolution, Communism today is as counter-revolutionary as Louis XVI or Kolchak ever was; that if one wishes to defend the civil liberties of Communists (as the Senator does not), one must do so on the same grounds that one defends the civil liberties of Nazis and fascists—no more, no less.

Professor Commager might retort that he knows all this full well, and that he is for civil liberties for everyone, fascist, Communist, or what-have-you. But if a Nazi had, in 1938, addressed a high-school audience in this country, extolling the accomplishments of Hitler's regime, presenting a thoroughly fictitious account of life in Nazi Germany, never once mentioning the existence of concentration camps—would Professor Commager find in such a speech "nothing that any normal person could find objectionable"? It is doubtless an injustice to him even to conceive of the possibility.

THIS notion of Communism as "left" and therefore at an opposite pole from fascism, which is "right," appears to have become intrinsic to the liberal outlook. It is imbedded in the meretricious historical analogies, in the rolling phrases about "the forces of freedom and those of fear," beneath which there lies the gross metaphysic of the liberal Manichee, apportioning the universe to "forward-looking" and "backward-looking" demiurges. It helps explain how Professor Commager can permit himself to write: "After all, it is no accident that the nations dedicated to freedom won the two great wars of the 20th century and those committed to totalitarianism went under"—when it is not only no accident, it is not even a fact. The same notion is evidenced in Zechariah Chafee's explanation (in his essay in the recent symposium *Civil Liberties Under Attack*) of the origin of Communist fronts: "It is inevitable that the membership of organizations formed to bring about change should include some persons who want a great deal of

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change"—as if Professor Chafee and the Communists were agreed on the direction of the change, quarreling only over the measure. It is the presupposition from which Ralph Barton Perry (in his new book *The Citizen Decides*) can deduce that Communism is "democratic" by virtue of being a revolt of the "masses" against the "classes," that the Soviet regime is a government "for the people with the consent of the people" though not by the people, and that the Chinese Communist leaders are "hostages" of a popular revolution.

Moreover, after staring out of the left corner of the eye for any length of time, there comes an irrepressible inclination to wink. How else explain, for instance, the attitude Alan Barth takes toward the Hiss-Chambers affair? He can begin a sentence: "Insofar as Chambers may be credited with having told the truth. . . ."; or: "whatever the guilt of Alger Hiss and whatever the utility of exposing it and punishing it a decade later. . . ." About Whittaker Chambers and the Communist "informer" in general, he is no longer judiciously bland but is knowingly tart: "The ex-Communists, conscious of their betrayal of American values, wanted the comfort of company; they had to show that many others, even many who were highly respected, had been as recreant as they." In other words, Chambers in telling the truth is a man of malice, Hiss in denying it is his defenseless victim. Hiss's guilt is problematic and, in any case, not important; Chambers' wickedness is certain.

On Owen Lattimore, there is liberal unanimity: he got a raw deal. Professor Commager believes (in his contribution to *Civil Liberties Under Attack*) that the attack on Lattimore was an attack on "independence and non-conformity." Professor Chafee laments: "Owen Lattimore did his own thinking and look how his services were appreciated." Alan Barth is casually positive: "Dr. Lattimore's ordeal was, of course, only the most spectacular instance of legislative punishment of teachers for expressing their opinions." About the worst that can be said for such arrant nonsense is that it is uttered in all sincerity. For the incontrovertible facts of the case are, "of course," that Owen Lattimore did *not* do his own thinking; that his "ordeal" was the public demonstration of this fact; that he was a faithful and enormously influential fellow-traveler who for more than a decade followed the Communist line as if magnetized by it, including a docile zig-zag during the Stalin-Hitler pact. Is it really no legitimate concern of Congress that such a man was appointed advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, that he accompanied Vice-President Wallace during his tour of Asia, that he was admired and listened to by important people in the State Department?

In his denunciation of Lattimore's pro-Communist record and in hurling unsubstantiated charges against him (chief of Soviet espionage, etc.), Senator McCarthy may well have been aiming a blow against independence of mind and nonconformity of spirit. For Messrs. Commager, Barth, and Chafee to defend Lattimore's pro-Communist record in order to defend such independence and nonconformity, is for them to play the Senator's game, on the losing side.

It is equally futile for liberals to try to match Senator McCarthy's irresponsible declamations with a crafty rhetoric of their own, especially when this rhetoric, while not designedly pro-Communist, is compelled by the logic of disingenuousness and special pleading to become so in effect. The need for disingenuousness arises out of a refusal to see Communism for what it is: a movement guided by conspiracy and aiming at totalitarianism, rather than merely another form of "dissent" or "nonconformity." Hence the liberal argument runs askew of reality and must clothe itself with neat obfuscation.

Once again, Professor Commager obliges with a superior specimen:

"The House Un-American Activities Committee has launched an attack on the Lawyers' Guild as a pro-Communist or 'subversive' organization. The chief basis for this attack is, as far as we know, that the Guild has proffered its services to the defense of Communists under indictment for violation

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of the Smith Act. We need not inquire into the accuracy of this charge or into the degree of zeal displayed by the Lawyers' Guild. Let us ask rather what are the logical conclusions to be drawn by the position which the House Committee has adopted? They are two: that certain criminals are so despicable that they are not entitled to counsel, and that a lawyer who defends a criminal is himself sympathetic to crime."

That phrase in the second sentence, "as far as we know," is curious. It implies strongly that the only conceivable explanation of the Committee's attitude is the action of the Guild in providing lawyers to defend indicted Communists, and that there is no public information which gives plausibility to the Committee's belief that the Guild is a "front" organization, controlled and run by Communists. On the contrary, however, "as far as we know," and we know much further than Professor Commager suggests, the Lawyers' Guild is a Communist creation that, as A. A. Berle stated when he resigned from it in 1940, "is not prepared to take any stand which conflicts with the Communist party line." Moreover, the House Committee on Un-American Activities has collected and published sufficient evidence to demonstrate this beyond cavil—which leads one to think that if Professor Commager spent nearly as much time reading the records of Congressional hearings as he does denouncing them, we should all be better off.

The entire third sentence is even more curious: "We need not inquire into the accuracy of this charge or into the degree of zeal displayed by the Lawyers' Guild." If we take "zeal" to mean pro-Communism (in the context, that is all it can mean), then the degree of this zeal and the accuracy of the charge of pro-Communism are precisely what we *do* need to inquire into. How can we know whether to sanction or condemn the Committee's investigation of the Guild as a pro-Communist organization unless we make an effort to find out if the Guild is or is not, in fact, a pro-Communist organization? Even Professor Commager surreptitiously ignores his own disclaimer, as the last two sentences of his paragraph show. Obviously, the two "logical conclusions" flow, not from the Committee's premise, but his own: namely, that the Lawyers' Guild is neither pro-Communist nor subversive. From the Committee's own premise, quite other logical conclusions may be inferred—one of them being that the Committee is engaged in showing up Communist fronts for what they are. Professor Commager's "logic" is a sleight-of-hand whereby premises that are prejudiced in favor of the Communist interpretation of affairs are made to pass for natural conclusions.

IN THE same vein, there is a liberal rhetoric of insinuation that works under cover of a high moral posture. Its net effect is to give a backhanded credence to the Communist assertion that it is impossible to oppose Communism vigorously without walking into the arms of Black Reaction. It is the kind of thing represented in the following observation of Alan Barth's:

"In the New York trial of eleven Communist Party leaders in 1949, a number of FBI undercover operatives who had joined the party appeared as prosecution witnesses. How widely such agents have been dispersed in labor unions, in lawful voluntary associations, and in political groups is a matter of mere conjecture. But it is certainly a matter of legitimate concern to Americans who care about preservation of the traditional rights of privacy."

A noble sentiment, and the unwary reader assents—who is against the right to privacy, and who is not prepared to be concerned with its violation? Only the exceptionally attentive will note that the supposed threat to "the traditional rights of privacy" is "a matter of mere conjecture." Whose conjecture? We are not told. Is there any ground for such a conjecture? We are not told that either. Is Mr. Barth against the use of undercover agents in principle? He does not say so. Is he against the use of undercover agents in Communist organizations? He does not say this, either. He would seem to be against dispersing FBI agents in

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bona fide labor unions, lawful voluntary associations, and political groups, and reminds us of the consequences. But who is for it? The answer, which he does not bother to give, is: nobody—and that is why the FBI is doing no such thing and why the whole business is a "matter of mere conjecture." In the course of Mr. Barth's innuendoes, however, the onus has been neatly shifted from the Communist conspirators to the FBI agents who identified them.

The same technique of persuasion is at work in such a statement as this one by Professor Commager: "It will be useful to determine, a generation from now, whether those universities that have purged their faculties are actually stronger than they were before the purges occurred—stronger in those essentials that go to make a university." This has about it so trembling an air of bittersweet wisdom that it seems positively boorish to ask: just which universities would Professor Commager describe as "purged"? Surely Columbia is not one of them, for Professor Commager is not the kind of man who would retain his post on a "purged" faculty. Is it Yale? Princeton? Harvard? University of Chicago? The list could be extended indefinitely, and never provoke an affirmative response, for there is not a single university in the United States that can be said to have been, in any meaningful sense of the word, "purged." There has been no more than a handful of cases where Communist college teachers have been dismissed, and less than a handful of cases where non-Communists have been unjustly fired as "Reds." To call this a "purge"—even regardless of whether or not one thinks Communists have a right to teach in colleges—is to echo Communist propaganda.

Perhaps Professor Commager had in mind the University of California, where several dozen (out of a total of more than a thousand) teachers found the idea of a special loyalty oath—the content of which was irrelevant to their action—so offensive and intolerable that they exercised their constitutional right to refuse to swear it, and consequently had to seek other employment. Granting that the notion of a special oath for teachers is obnoxious, and even conceding that this minority was correct and courageous in its particular reaction to it—is it the part of sobriety to insist, as Professor Commager goes on to do, that the philosophy behind the actions of California's Board of Trustees does not differ "in any essentials" from the philosophy behind the totalitarian control of university teaching? One swallow does not make a spring, or one injustice an apocalypse.

DESPITE their fondness for clichés of Communist manufacture, all these liberal spokesmen are sincerely anti-Communist—otherwise, what they have to say would be of little interest to anyone. But their rejection of Communism has all the semblance of a preliminary gesture, a repudiation aiming to linger in the memory as a floating credential. It has little relation to all the ensuing scenes of the political drama, where bad conscience and stubborn pride join to guide the liberal through his role.

Did not the major segment of American liberalism, as a result of joining hands with the Communists in a Popular Front, go on record as denying the existence of Soviet concentration camps? Did it not give its blessing to the "liquidation" of millions of Soviet "kulaks"? Did it not apologize for the mass purges of 1936-38, and did it not solemnly approve the grotesque trials of the Old Bolsheviks? Did it not applaud the massacre of the non-Communist left by the GPU during the Spanish Civil War? All this carries no weight with Alan Barth who knows that, though a man repeat the Big Lie, so long as he is of a liberal intention he is saved. On the participation of non-Communists in Communist fronts during the 30's, he writes: "In the main, their participation, while it lasted, was not only innocent but *altogether* praiseworthy." (My italics.)

Even Francis Biddle, who is generally cautious, remarks in his book *The Fear of Freedom:* "What makes an organization subversive? If a vast majority of its members are Communists but its conduct has always been

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exemplary, advocating desirable social reforms which Communists usually back, it can hardly fit the description."

One surmises that Mr. Biddle is not really so politically naive as this statement, on the face of it, would lead one to believe. He must know what it means to be "subversive," since it was he who, as Attorney General, sent eighteen members of a minuscule Trotskyist sect to jail in 1942 for being just that; he must know how Communists work, how front organizations act as an ancillary to the Communist party apparatus, since this is a matter of common knowledge and Mr. Biddle is uncommonly literate and intelligent. No, it was no elevated unsophistication that urged him on, but rather a sense of shame and a cowardliness to confess that shame. Mr. Biddle, like Mr. Barth, refuses to admit what is now apparent: that a generation of earnest reformers who helped give this country a New Deal should find themselves in retrospect stained with the guilt of having lent aid and comfort to Stalinist tyranny. This is, to be sure, a truth of hindsight, an easy truth. But it is the truth nonetheless, and might as well be owned up to. If American liberalism is not willing to discriminate between its achievements and its sins, it only disarms itself before Senator McCarthy, who is eager to have it appear that its achievements *are* its sins.

THERE is a false pride, by which liberals persuade themselves that no matter what association a man has had with a Communist enterprise, he is absolutely guiltless of the crimes that Communism has committed so long as he was moved to this association by a generous idealism. There is a political mythology, by which liberals locate Communism over on the "left," in a zone exempt from the unsparing verdict directed against the totalitarian "right." There is also a fear, a fear that the American democracy in an excess of anti-Communism will gather its abundant energy into a wave of "conformism" that will drown all free thought. This pride, this mythology, this fear all unite for a liberal prejudgment of issues (e.g., the cases of Alger Hiss, Owen Lattimore, William Remington, Harry Dexter White) which is not easy to explain on a purely rational view. It is what stimulates a flood of irrelevant and gaudy prose about loyalty in the abstract ("like love it must be given freely," etc.) while it shuns a careful discussion of Communist disloyalty in the concrete.

Of the three factors, the fear of "conformism" or "orthodoxy" is probably the most influential in its appeal, for it is founded in some degree on objective fact. Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, both friendly critics of the egalitarian trend, pointed out long ago that in every democratic society there is an inherent tendency toward a "despotism of public opinion"; where the majority makes the laws, it may also wish—especially in feverish and unsettled times—to make opinion, lauding the popular and extirpating the unpopular. In America, where the people are more powerful than elsewhere, and where there is, too, a significant tradition of vigilante-ism, the danger of a despotism of public opinion is proportionately greater. When the State Department is forced to suspend an exhibition abroad of modern American art because some Congressmen denounce it as "Communistic," the danger of such a despotism seems more than academic, and many otherwise sensible people are led to reprehend any attempt to unveil Communist activities or Communist beliefs as a malignant form of "punishment by publicity," which will soon be extended to all opinions that illiterate and narrow-minded Congressmen detest.

What these people do not see is that Communism, because it is a conspiratorial movement, has not the faintest interest in any genuine resistance to the despotism of public opinion. These martyrs whose testament is —"I refuse to answer on the grounds that it might incriminate me"! These "intellectuals" of Hollywood and radio who are outraged at a Congressman's insistence that they say what they actually believe, and who wail that they are in danger of—being excluded from well-paying jobs! Is this the vibrant

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voice of "nonconformity" and "dissent"? Are these the American rebels of today? Oddly enough, the majority of American liberals seem to think so: they have been moved to indignation by the questions, but never moved to disgust by the answers. Presumably, this is what they think a dissenter looks like, and no sadder commentary is possible on the corruption they have inflicted on themselves. And not only on themselves—for this image of a dissenter happens to coincide with the image held by Joseph McCarthy and Pat McCarran, for whom the dissenter is *per se* a scheming subversive. No greater spur to the despotism of public opinion can be imagined than this identification of free thought with underground conspiracy.

There is only one way the despotism of public opinion can be resisted. That is for a person with unpopular views to express himself, loudly, brazenly, stubbornly, in disregard of the consequences. Such a person may have to suffer for his convictions, as others have suffered before him, and as others will suffer after. But the responsibility for the mind's freedom in a democracy lies with the intransigent thinker, with his courage to shout the truth in the face of the mob, with his faith that truth will win out, and with his maddening commitment to the truth, win or lose. Yet, during all the occasions of the past several years, not a single liberal voice was to say to these strange "victims": "Speak up and damn the consequences! Let them take your job—as they certainly will anyway; tell the truth—you have nothing to lose and honor to gain!" Instead, there were erudite essays on the "right to a job" that would have corroborated William James in his mournful conviction that "the prevalent fear of poverty among our educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers."

STILL, unworthy as these "victims" are, may they not, despite themselves, represent the right of the individual to hold whatever opinions he pleases without having to give a public accounting of them? Even if these Communists and Communist sympathizers are despicable, don't they have the right to believe privately anything they please? This is the way the question is frequently put, and it reveals a total misapprehension as to what Communism really is.

Communism is an idea, beyond question. Indeed, it is an Idea, and it is of the essence of this Idea that it is also a conspiracy to subvert every social and political order it does not dominate. It is, furthermore, an Idea that has ceased to have any intellectual status but has become incarnate in the Soviet Union and the official Communist parties, to whose infallible directives unflinching devotion is owed. A person who is captive to this Idea can, at any time, in any place, be called upon to do whatever the Idea, i.e., the Party, thinks necessary. Since this is so, it is of considerably more than private interest if a person is held by the Idea—he is, all appearances to the contrary, a person with different loyalties, and with different canons of scrupulousness, from ours. To grant him an "immunity by silence" is to concede the right to conspiracy, a concession no government ever has made or ever will make.

This sounds exaggerated, as it must, being so foreign to the nature of American political experience. Many of us have known Communists, and most of them conveyed no impression of being conspirators. But then, some of us have known Nazis too, and they conveyed no immediate association with gas chambers. It is quite impossible to judge a political movement by the personality of an individual member. Roosevelt certainly didn't see in Stalin any symptoms of blood lust. Hermann Goering in jail struck one as a clever clown. And there are still plenty of people who can't believe that Alger Hiss ever did any such thing.

No doubt there are some present members of the Communist party who would, in a showdown, break free of the Idea and rally to the democratic cause. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing who they are. No doubt there are some present members and fellow-travelers of the Communist party who would sooner or later get disillusioned with

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Communism if they were permitted to hold down their present jobs as teachers, civil service workers, etc., whereas they are likely to harden in the face of persecution. Unfortunately, it is quite as impossible to tell the citizens of Oshkosh, some of whom have suffered personal loss as a result of the war in Korea, that there is no harm in having their children taught the three R's by a Communist, as it would have been to persuade the citizens of Flatbush in 1939 that there was no cause for excitement in their children being taught by a Nazi, or to convince a businessman that it is smart practice for him to pay a handsome salary to someone pledged to his "liquidation." No doubt some of these people became Communists after having suffered during the depression, or during a labor conflict, or as a result of race prejudice, and society must bear its share of the blame. Unfortunately, as Fitzjames Stephens remarked many decades ago: "It does not follow that because society caused a fault it is not to punish it. A man who breaks his arm when he is drunk may have to cut it off when he is sober."

THE problem of fighting Communism while preserving civil liberties is no simple one, and there is no simple solution. A prerequisite for any solution, however, is, firstly, a proper understanding of Communism for what it is, and secondly, a sense of proportion. So long as liberals agree with Senator McCarthy that the fate of Communism involves the fate of liberalism, and that we must choose between complete civil liberties for everyone and a disregard for civil liberties entirely, we shall make no progress except to chaos. So long as one is either for or against "guilt by association," it is hopeless to try to distinguish between a sober and silly definition of that concept—sober when it is taken to mean, as for instance the Canwell Committee of the State of Washington took it to mean, that anyone who is a member of three or more organizations officially declared subversive is to be considered a Communist; silly when it is taken to mean, as many government loyalty boards take it to mean, that if you have a friend or a relation who is sympathetic to Communism, you are a "bad security risk." So long as Senator McCarthy and the liberals agree that the right of a Communist to teach or be a government employee is a matter of principle, we shall remain distant from that intelligent discrimination between one case and another, and one situation and another, which alone can give us our true bearings. And so long as Senator McCarthy and the liberals are enmeshed in this confusion, the Senator will grow the stronger, for such confusion is the sap of his political life.

Inevitably, liberals will disagree among themselves about the appropriateness of specific actions with regard to Communism and Communists. Inevitably, too, there will always be a basic division and antagonism between liberalism (which is solicitous of freedom) and McCarthyism (which is not). But if a liberal wishes to defend the civil liberties of Communists or of Communist fellow-travelers, he must enter the court of American opinion with clean hands and a clear mind. He must show that he knows the existence of an organized subversive movement such as Communism is a threat to the consensus on which civil society and its liberties are based. He must bluntly acknowledge Communists and fellow-travelers to be what they are, and then, if he so desires, defend the expediency in particular circumstances of allowing them the right to be what they are. He must speak as one of *us*, defending *their* liberties. To the extent he insists that they are on our side, that we can defend our liberties only by uncritically defending theirs, he will be taken as speaking as one of them.

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THE MAN WHO INVENTED THE COMMANDOS

Wingate of Palestine

EDWIN SAMUEL

I READ with deep interest Tosca Fyvel's memoir of Orde Wingate in COMMENTARY [February 1951], in which he mentions Wingate's role in devising what later became famous as "commando tactics." As it happens, I am able to supplement Fyvel's account with some hitherto unpublished information about the circumstances surrounding Wingate's daring military innovations.

Orde Wingate was my neighbor in Jerusalem in 1937 and 1938, when he and his strikingly beautiful wife Lorna came to live in the Christian Arab quarter of Talbiah. I had several long talks with him about his views on the Jewish future and, in particular, about the new tactical methods he had introduced in his fight with the Arab rebel bands then infesting Palestine. As I myself was high up on the list of senior British Colonial civil servants to be assassinated, I was naturally interested in his success.

Wingate was a compelling figure to look at, with a determined jaw and a blazing eye. Anything he undertook he did with a fanatical intensity. Not only was he one of the very few British civil or military officers in Palestine who ever learned Hebrew; he pitched into that difficult language with almost frightening vigor. In addition to taking frequent lessons from one of the ablest Hebrew teachers in Jerusalem, he memorized long lists of new words daily, writing them on slips of paper which he propped up under the mirror as he shaved. He often recited some of the Psalms in Hebrew, so often that his wife knew many of them by heart without having the slightest idea what any of the words meant.

Lorna Wingate was much younger than Orde, and the only child of a proud Scottish family. She had married, I believe, at seventeen and was still under twenty when she came to Jerusalem. She was one of the most imperious young women I have ever met, and it is hardly surprising that, what with Orde's sympathetic and heterodox opinions about the Jews, the couple should have rapidly become about the most unpopular pair in the narrow British society of Jerusalem.

Fyvel correctly stresses the influence on Wingate's beliefs of his father's Puritanical connections. I personally consider that Wingate's passionate championship of the Jews was also due in large measure to the fact that his father was a convinced British Israelite. The British Israelites believe—on the strangest medley of evidences—that the British people are themselves the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. True, when Wingate one day disclosed this belief of his father's and I ventured to suggest that it might have predisposed his own views in favor of the Jews, he denied it vehemently and flew into one of his passions.

Wingate was a very passionate man. He seemed to suffer from considerable repression, and he boiled over on the slightest provocation. Once when he was at the Weizmanns' house in Rehovot (when Weizmann was working at the Sieff Institute and long before he became president of Israel), Wingate was upset by some casual remark of my

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EDWIN SAMUEL, who here records his recollections of the fabulous Orde Wingate, is principal of the Institute of Public Administration in Israel. He was born in London in 1898, the eldest son of Viscount Samuel, and was educated at Balliol College, Oxford. He held many important positions under the Mandate government in Palestine from 1920 to 1945. His articles have appeared in the *Reporter*, *Zionist Quarterly*, and other publications.

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wife's. He flung his cocktail glass on the marble floor at her feet, jumped into his car and drove up posthaste to Jerusalem to explain to *me* what had happened. I gently suggested that he should explain to my wife, which he subsequently did.

Wingate had in general a gloomy disposition. Many years later, after having led, with spectacular success, a force of Abyssinian irregulars in the British campaign to wrest Abyssinia from the Italians, he came back to Cairo. He was full of malaria and deeply hurt by the lack of official recognition of his remarkable exploits. He called for some fruit to be brought to his hotel bedroom and attempted to commit suicide by slashing his wrists with his fruit knife, forgetting apparently that he was wearing a loaded pistol. Luckily his attempt was frustrated, and the black mood passed.

This passion and this gloom were, however, merely the counterparts of his intense enthusiasms. One of these enthusiasms was his deep and genuine championship of the Jews: and God knows they needed champions at that time, with Hitler on the rampage in Europe and the Arabs on the rampage in Palestine. Wingate's solution of the Jewish problem was simple—mass Jewish immigration into Palestine and later into Transjordan. He was wholly Revisionist in this ideology, much to my astonishment and even alarm. With his undoubted military genius, he would unfailingly have taken command of the Jewish forces at the beginning of Israel's war of liberation in the spring of 1948. His death in an airplane crash in Burma four years earlier materially affected the course of Jewish history, for had he lived I doubt if the armistice lines would be those now in existence.

Fyvel says that Wingate was sent away from Palestine in 1938 "owing to the enmity of the Palestine British officials whose pro-Arab code he had so successfully transgressed." This is not quite correct. Wingate was sent away from Palestine by the British commander-in-chief, one of his warmest supporters, because he was insubordinate. When he was told that his "night squads" were to be disbanded, their goal having been achieved, he protested vehemently that this step would not at all commend itself to the Jewish Agency. He was reminded that he was an officer in His Majesty's forces and that it was clear that he had ceased to take an objective view of his duties. He was consequently shifted to the post of brigade major in an anti-aircraft artillery regiment in southern England. There he ate his heart out for many months, long after the outbreak of World War II. Ultimately he was rescued by Victor Cazalet, MP, who got him put into active circulation again in Abyssinia.

This brings us to Wingate's contribution to the art of waging war, originally developed by him in Palestine with ruthless clarity.

This was in 1937, when the Arab rebellion was at its height, and some 100,000 British troops—the flower of Britain's peacetime army—were unable to suppress the rebels. Large areas, especially the hill country of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, had now fallen under effective rebel control. No government tax collector could venture out from the cities. All outlying police stations had been evacuated. Police informers when caught by the rebels were sentenced to death by rebel courts and executed. No British or Jewish motor transport could use even the main roads unless in convoy and under armed escort. No patrols could go out in strength of less than a platoon of infantry and accompanied by armored cars. And even these were frequently ambushed by the rebels or blown up by land mines.

Most of the Arab villages supported the rebellion, joined by Arab irregulars recruited largely in Syria and brought into Palestine across the northern frontier. (Only later was a thick barbed-wire fence built along the northern and northeastern borders to impede this movement.) The Arab villagers in Palestine were supplied with arms from Lebanon and Syria, paid for by the Mufti of Jerusalem and his adherents, with assistance from the Axis powers.

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This was the situation when Wingate came on the scene. A junior intelligence officer at army headquarters in Jerusalem, he was sent up to Haifa to investigate the smuggling of arms over the northern frontier, which neither the Palestine police nor the British army had been able to stop. Wingate quickly discovered the routes taken by the smugglers and their mule columns and at what hours of which nights they traveled. Although he had been instructed merely to submit a report, Wingate—then only a captain—grossly exceeded his instructions. Not only did he lay an armed ambush for the smugglers and capture a whole column of them, but he put his force together from young Haganah men from a nearby Jewish village. And he did all this without the consent or even the knowledge of the brigadier in charge of the area. There was subsequently a most unholy row. Wingate was recalled at once to headquarters in Jerusalem; but the originality of his methods was appreciated by the British commander-in-chief and he was authorized to recruit and command "night squads," under the proviso that he would never again operate in the area of that irate brigadier.

Fyvel implies that the "night squads" were almost entirely a Jewish force "with a handful of British soldiers and NCO's." Actually, the force consisted of some two hundred Jews and a hundred British troops, with Wingate as their commander and a couple of other British officers to assist him. This was in the days when there was still much effective British-Jewish cooperation in Palestine, unlike the tragic situation a few years later at the end of the Mandate, when the Jews of Palestine were themselves in rebellion against a harsh and unfeeling British administration.

THE night squads of 1937 and 1938 were based on the Jewish village of Ein Harod at the eastern end of the Valley of Esdraelon. Their aim was to discover, root out, and destroy the many Arab guerrillas then entrenched in the hills of Galilee. These guerrilla bands, largely recruited from Syria, consisted of groups of from fifty to two hundred armed men, each under a leader. They attacked Jewish villages, stole their cattle, and set fire to their trees and crops. They ambushed British patrols and Jewish motor convoys. They maintained themselves by forcible levies of food and money from the Arab villages in the areas where they operated. When they were not on the move, they holed up in some inaccessible Arab hill village or even in caves in the wild mountain ranges.

The Palestine police and the British army found it almost impossible to catch these bands. It was not so much from apathy, as Fyvel implies, as from the use of hopelessly inadequate methods. If an agent of the British brought news to the nearest police post of the presence of a band near a certain Arab village, as likely as not some Arab policeman —or even the agent himself—would warn that village that it would shortly be raided. By the time that the troops and police had arrived, days later, to search the village, the band would have quietly moved elsewhere.

Even when there was no leakage of information, the British usually moved too slowly to catch up with the Arab bands, who were protected from surprise by a screen of peasant watchers on the hilltops by day and by night. As soon as a convoy of military trucks carrying a search party left its barracks—which was usually by night—and its headlights made clear which road it was taking, the signal would be flashed by hand flashlights from hilltop to hilltop until every village on the route was alerted. The villagers then had ample time to bury their rifles in their olive groves, and to carry away their convalescent wounded—who might arouse the suspicion of the British and be held for questioning. If there were guerrillas in the villages they would automatically become simple peasants, wearing anyhow the same clothes and talking the same language. It was a very clever British police officer who could tell the difference.

When a military convoy reached its destination, it would draw up with much grinding of brakes on the road below the village to be searched. Sergeants would shout to their men to de-bus. The clatter of their

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nailed boots on the hard road could be heard for half a mile on a still night. Every able-bodied Arab male in the village had ample time to take to his heels to avoid questioning. Then, when the troops had crawled up the hillside and had carefully surrounded the village, they would find it almost deserted.

Captain Wingate's keen mind rapidly changed all this. Information leaked back to the village, did it? So Wingate built up his own intelligence service, with Arab agents reporting solely to him. If a village when raided was found deserted, the agent involved was dismissed. An absolute rule was enforced: no intelligence received through the police or the army was ever acted on; it must be exclusively Wingate's intelligence.

Arab watchers on the hilltops flashed signals, did they, when they saw which road the convoy was taking? That was easy to circumvent. Wingate arranged for convoys with covered trucks to leave his camp *every* night in *every* direction. The Arab watchers never knew which convoy had troops in it and which did not. Nor could they hear convoys pulling up on the roadside at night. Wingate's convoys *never* pulled up. They slowed down somewhat on a steep grade and the men, shod in sneakers, dropped off silently one by one and rallied around their sergeants in the ditches. Wingate could unload a hundred armed men anywhere in Galilee without a single Arab's being the wiser.

This was not all. Wingate's men were specially trained in map-reading. They could make their way across country by night, along the wild mountain valleys and over the deserted passes, by stars and by compass. Hence Wingate never dropped his men close to the village gates: they would be dropped miles away, at midnight. But—by dawn they would be quietly in position around the target village.

The night squads had no long supply columns to slow them up. The men carried no spare clothing and no rations; but each did carry an extra quantity of ammunition. Their rifles and grenades were carefully wrapped in sacking to prevent the slightest clank. Men with colds who might sneeze and ruin the operation were left in camp. Wingate was ruthless with his men and broke every rule of the British army. If a man coughed nervously while waiting for the dawn, Wingate slashed him across the face. But his men were devoted to him, for he was invariably successful.

Time after time he achieved complete tactical surprise. Two or three hundred well-trained, determined, and heavily armed Jewish and British troops would be lying in the dark on the outskirts of an Arab village, fifty miles away from Wingate's base. Everyone in the village, save the unsuspecting Arab watchers on the adjacent hilltops, would be fast asleep. As the first light of dawn came over the plateau east of the Jordan, a grenade would explode in the village street. Every rebel would wake with a start, grab his rifle, and dash into the street, to be met by highly accurate cross fire from strategically placed Bren guns. If the rebels attempted to flee, they would run into an outer cordon and be captured.

Conducted in the half-light of dawn, this kind of operation was very difficult to control. Once Wingate himself was wounded in the forearm when he got in the way of one of his own Bren guns.

Wingate took much time and care in bringing his men to the highest pitch of physical efficiency. Between raids they lay up in Ein Harod and rested. Days passed and still he made no move: then he would make two raids in quick succession, and in widely separate parts of the country. The British army had once more gained the initiative. The Arabs never knew where and when Wingate would strike. No rebel could sleep soundly at night in any village or cave: he always had one ear cocked for the violent crack of the first grenade, the staccato clatter of the Bren gun. The ardor of the guerrillas, their paltry pay, were inadequate to counter the chronic fear. After many of their leaders were killed or captured the remainder gradually withdrew over the northern frontier. Area after area was cleared. The Jewish vil-

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lages were less frequently attacked: Jewish convoys could travel on the roads with less risk of ambush or land mines. Thus did the Arab rebellion break down, and order became restored. The British forces, so great a bulk of which had been locked up in Palestine, were re-deployed in time for World War II. Palestine was saved and remained under British control for another ten years.

THE night squads in Palestine had shown Wingate one thing: that ordinary men could be turned into "commandos." When, as a result of Wingate's experience, the British created their official commandos they took as recruits not supermen but ordinary infantrymen. Wingate was able to turn British country regiments into "Chindits" for use in air-supplied raiding columns behind the Japanese lines in Burma. It was as a result of this further experience that Wingate wrote his famous manual for raiding columns. In this manual, Wingate's logical mind tried to cope with the problem of punishing deserters and sentries found asleep at their posts. Under existing British military law they could be tried only by a court martial of senior officers. This meant that the junior officer commanding his column in the field had to bring the would-be deserter or defaulting sentry all the way back to base as a prisoner with several valuable men guarding him whose services could be better used elsewhere. Wingate recommended that junior officers commanding raiding columns sent behind the enemy lines for long periods be given full court-martial powers, including the authority to execute their own men. But this was too much for the British command, and his suggestions were never adopted.

Wingate's Chindits in Burma suffered heavy casualties, as readers of Bernard Fergusson's *Behind the Chindwin* will remember. (Fergusson was himself one of Wingate's column commanders in Burma and by a strange turn of fortune came to Palestine after World War II as a senior police officer.) There is also some doubt whether they really justified their existence. The campaign of which they were to form an integral part was called off at the last moment. Wingate pleaded that his operation be allowed to go forward on its own and this was reluctantly granted. Much valuable experience was gained: but the price paid in lives was high.

Whether the Chindit operation justified itself or not, there is no doubt about the success of Wingate's night squads in Palestine. They provided an unorthodox solution to an unusual problem. They became the model for all raiding units formed in the British army in World War II.

WHEN WINGATE died most untimely in an air crash in Burma in 1944, a great general perished young. He had great qualities—originality of mind and a fanatical devotion to the task in hand. In this he resembled T. E. Lawrence, who also rose to fame in the Middle East, but east, not west, of the Jordan. Lawrence had a double advantage over Wingate: he survived the war and he was a great writer. But for all that, Wingate was his equal as a military genius.

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THE RELIGIOUS STIRRING ON THE CAMPUS

A Student Generation "Accessible to Good"

WILL HERBERG

ON NOVEMBER 8, 1951, the *Cornell Daily Sun*, the student paper, ran a long editorial noting the inadequacy of instruction in religion at Cornell and demanding of the administration wider opportunities for such study within the university curriculum. Such a thing would probably have been unthinkable not so very long ago, either at Cornell or at any other of the larger universities. It certainly would have been unthinkable in my own student days.

Almost as unthinkable would have been an experience such as my recent one at Cornell, where I spent five weeks as visiting lecturer, under the auspices of the Cornell United Religious Work (CURW), a university agency. In this period, I conducted weekly seminars at every level of the academic hierarchy, from undergraduates to faculty, spoke at some twenty other meetings and discussions, and met a considerable number of students in personal conference. All this, of course, is not enough—even when supplemented by similar briefer experiences at a dozen other colleges and universities in various parts of the country—to justify any definitive conclusions on the "typical" college student of today. But I did come away from the colleges with a strong impression that something new was stirring on the campus.

To Cornell, as to most of the other institutions, I came as a lecturer on "religion." Now religion is a very ambiguous and often misleading term. It is variously understood, or misunderstood, as an institutional vested interest, a metaphysical system, a "rewarding" emotional experience, an impressive ritual, the preachment of high ideals, a code of laws and observances—and against all these, students usually have their immunizing prejudices. But once it was discovered that I was talking about something else—about the meaning of existence and the nature of one's ultimate loyalties—the initial resistance was overcome. Attendance at seminars and discussions was large and kept growing as the program advanced. Invitations came to me from campus groups for lectures not originally scheduled. In fact, the *Sun* editorial mentioned above referred to the "amazingly large numbers of people" who came to these sessions as striking evidence of a real desire for more religious courses and classes.

WHAT did I find to be the student mind on religion at Cornell and the other campuses I visited? There are three degrees of religious expression: interest, concern, and ultimate commitment. About commitment, no one may presume to judge of another. But interest and concern I think I can say I found everywhere I came. Certainly there was none of the supercilious indifference that was once regarded as *de rigueur*. At Cornell, and elsewhere too, a large section of the campus community is genuinely interested in what religion has to say. And to an increasing degree, religion

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DURING the past quarter-century or so, religion on the American college campus has been commonly described as consisting of trite sermons by frustrated chaplains to a bored and indifferent student body. Of late, however, there has been rumor of a change—books on religion are being read, religious speakers are listened to attentively, and religious issues have become a subject for dormitory discussion. Here we have a report on the "religious revival" by one who has been at the center of it. WILL HERBERG has visited dozens of campuses during the past couple of years, has spoken to thousands of students, and is himself not a little responsible for the new collegiate temper. Mr. Herberg is the author of the recent book *Judaism and Modern Man;* he is also managing editor of the quarterly *Judaism,* and a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY; most of his first writings on religion appeared in our pages.

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seems to be arousing a concern that was once pretty much reserved for politics.

Let me make it clear that I am not speaking of "religion majors" or future theological students, those who are professionally interested in religion. Cornell is hardly the place to find many of these, and it is not them that I have in mind, but rather young men and women to whom religion must appeal from outside their academic specialties—students in natural science and engineering, agriculture or home economics, liberal arts, sociology and psychology, medicine and law. It was among such students that the new concern with religion was most marked, and this I take to be a fact of some significance.

The appeal I made was in every case an appeal to decision. I found a ready understanding of this approach, among "believers" and "unbelievers" alike. All men have their religion, I tried to point out, for everyone necessarily strives to give meaning to his life by grounding it in something beyond itself, in something taken as his ultimate concern. We thus, in a sense, all live by faith, whether we realize it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not. The great, the searching, the shattering question, the question that determines our entire existence, is: what *kind* of faith, faith in *what*? Shall the faith by which we live be the obsessive idolization of something of this world, something limited, partial, and relative, masquerading as ultimate and final, or shall it be total commitment to the God beyond, the God to whom Judaism and Christianity bear witness? Each of these ways has its own consequences for life. It is up to us to make the choice; and choose we must, for though we are in a measure free to decide, we are not free *not* to decide. "Man must worship something; if he does not worship God, he will worship an idol made of wood or of gold or of ideas" (Dostoevsky). This is the question of religion in its basic existential import, that is, in its relevance to the basic issues of human existence. When I put the problem this way and confronted the students with the demand for decision—and this I did no matter how "theoretical" the subject or academic the level of discussion—what I was saying clearly struck a responsive note.

It is not easy to isolate the factors involved in the change of spiritual atmosphere on the campus. Perhaps the times we live in are having their effect. The "younger generation" —as the Cornell *Sun* editorial, with a glance at the recent *Time* report on "the silent generation," emphasized—feels the pervasive insecurity of contemporary life with particular poignancy. The utopias and panaceas, the messianic faiths in science, planning, progress, and revolution, have collapsed, and with them have gone the shibboleths that passed muster in another age. These will no longer do. Thinking young people of today demand something deeper, something more serious, something that bears a more authentic relation to human existence. As one girl, unusually articulate, put it: "What we are looking for is the substance of life. What we want to know is what has gone wrong." Ultimate problems have quite unaccountably become immediate problems and are demanding ultimate as well as immediate answers.

THE collapse of the obsessive social idolatries of the 20's and 30's is particularly noteworthy. The "soft" liberal utopianism of the Wilsonian era and the "hard" Marxist utopianism of the subsequent period have both virtually disappeared from the campuses I visited. The student of today is possibly a wiser, but certainly a sadder young man. He is not so ready to join "liberal" organizations or to go out and carry banners on the picket line; he is much more wary, and with good reason. This was brought home to me very forcefully at one large Midwestern university when I inquired of a group of alert, sensitive students, with whom I had been discussing things for several hours, why they did not belong to some liberal group on the campus, particularly the Students for Democratic Action. The answer was given soberly, without bitterness: "Every 'liberal' organization on this campus for the past ten years has turned out to be a Communist front. Maybe the SDA is different; but we've got to see." The allure of slogans is gone. Politics

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has revealed itself to have more complexity, more difficulty, more tragedy, than the slogans of yesterday could encompass.

There are those who look back nostalgically to former days, who sigh with regret at the passing of flamboyant campus radicalism. I am not one of them. I am not unmindful of the generous impulses that went into campus radicalism, but I cannot forget the perils and corruptions at its very heart. Frankly, I prefer the student of today, not so "active," more skeptical of formulas and slogans, but—at least such is my impression—more sophisticated in his understanding of life and deeper in his response to it. At Cornell, I lectured on Communism and democracy at a graduate seminar, on Communism and the labor movement at the Industrial and Labor Relations School, on the problem of security to law students; at other times, too, the question of Communism came up in many contexts. There was always keen interest and vigorous discussion, but the quality of the interest was very different from what it would once have been. It was far less ideological, less given to standard phrases and routine thinking, much more concerned with the problem of Communism as an aspect of the basic problem of History Gone Wrong—one might say as an aspect of the problem of tragedy and evil in human history.

More questioning, more skeptical—yet more open-minded to the word of faith. This is no paradox, or rather it is a paradox only to those to whom religion is identical with the security of a settled knowledge. There is nothing, however, more false than the notion that the religious mind—if religion is taken in its authentic Judeo-Christian sense—is a passive, credulous, uncritical mind. The very reverse is the case. "Wisdom," T. S. Eliot very truly says, "consists largely of skepticism and uncynical disillusion. Skepticism and disillusion are a useful equipment for religious understanding." They were not ready "believers," the young men and women whom I met in seminar, discussion, or conference. They were, as I have said, rather doubting in their cast of mind, extremely suspicious of emotionalism, glittering generalities, and easy absolutes. To mean anything to them, the word of religion has to be a critical word: it has to refuse to take anything in this world for granted and has to come as a challenge to all securities, intellectual or moral. This is precisely what the prophetic faith of Judaism and Christianity does.

It is sometimes difficult for religious people of an older generation, especially those to whom religion has become largely a matter of convention, to appreciate this paradox of the skeptical, constantly questioning young person who yet displays such religious concern. But it should be remembered that the young people of today are not so much "returning to religion" as struggling to make the primordial decision of faith *anew*. The students I met who were most deeply concerned about religion came overwhelmingly from religiously tepid or altogether non-religious homes. As one girl put it: "It is they [the parents] who are the 'lost generation'; *we're* trying to find our way back." For young people like this it is obviously impossible simply to pick up and adopt the traditional formulas and practices of their elders. Nothing second-hand will do. Faith must be personally appropriated and must become operative in life if it is to have any meaning at all. The perennial truth of the Judeo-Christian tradition must come as a *new* truth and prove itself in terms of the best knowledge and against the most potent ideologies of the day. The new spirituality is not a return to a pre-critical age; such a return is impossible. It is rather an advance toward a *post*-critical faith, a faith that is not afraid to ask questions because its governing formula is the Biblical injunction: "Test all things and hold on to that which is good."

All this came out most clearly in the scores of personal interviews that I had with students. In these interviews, which were generally conducted in a remarkably frank and intimate way, "intellectual" questions, questions of basic personal relations, and questions that clamored for immediate decision were merged and fused. The existence

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of God, the necessity of religious decision, the relevance of religion to life; sex, marriage, intermarriage, relations to parents, group living on the campus; war, draft, and the choice of career—none of these things was discussed in the abstract, but always in the urgency of personal decision. What the young men and women wanted was not merely help in solving a series of isolated problems but also light on how religious faith could give the insight and power to deal with the crucial situations of life.

A question that constantly recurred, and in a way reflected the quality of the concern that prompted it, was: "What difference does religion make? Isn't it just a matter of what you feel inside, like what you get in reading poetry; what does it matter so far as the outside is concerned?" This dualism of "inside" and "outside," of mind and body, so ingrained in our thinking, converts religion into an aesthetic-emotional experience with little relevance to the common life. But of course the religion I was talking about was not that at all; what I was talking about was a total commitment in life, and when religion was understood in this way, it was not difficult to show that "as a man believes about ultimates, so he deals with immediates." Clearly, the students' interest in religion was not simply or even primarily a matter of intellectual curiosity. It was a concern with life, with finding the meaning and substance of life, although that term was understood rather more personally than in the extroverted era of "social consciousness."

I AM afraid that my comment so far sounds like an unrelieved eulogy of the "younger generation." I do not mean it to be such. Along with the new vitality I encountered on the campus, I came across also a good deal of confusion, moral and intellectual, and not inconsiderable weakness. There was, first, the confusion due to the disintegration of old conventional standards under the impact of a new environment. Frequently these standards, which the students had absorbed in the home and brought with them to college, were narrow, unreal, and repressive to start with—for example, the uneasy conviction I found among some very earnest young men and women that the Bible was "against" beer and theaters! In the larger context of campus life, these notions sooner or later revealed themselves as meaningless and unworkable. The students then either found themselves in an intolerable moral void, or else, in reaction, they became painfully rigid and compulsive in their habits of life. In either case, the consequences were mounting insecurity, anxiety, and frustration.

Perhaps the most serious weakness I found among students on the campus was an unwillingness, often an inability, to decide. This difficulty was in part traceable to a psychological reluctance to mature, to grow up and stand on one's own feet; in part, too, it was a result of the condition I have just mentioned, the absence or confusion of norms in terms of which alone real decision is possible. In a way, this is a malady that afflicts our time and our society, taking form in a flight from freedom and the abdication of responsibility; but it seems to me to be unduly encouraged by certain defects in campus life, which, even more than life outside, tends to make few demands for real decision. Its structure is such that the student can let himself be carried from point to point by external forces and authorities without ever being seriously confronted with the necessity of genuinely autonomous action. Many factors conspire to this end—the vast size of the institutions and the highly centralized administrative system, excessive academic departmentalization, even the patterns of group living in fraternities or houses. There is an uneasy awareness of this on the part of some students, but naturally many, many more are affected without being aware of it.

Since the religious demand I was making was always presented as a demand for life-determining decision, and since many of the personal situations laid before me were rooted in the inability to decide, I came up against this problem in almost all my discussions. One young Jewish student, unusually bright and popular, was torn apart with indecision as to what career to follow—medicine or so-

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cial science research. All that the university authorities seemed able to do was to send him from one aptitude test to another, but since he turned out to be almost equally apt in both fields, that didn't help him very much. Besides, his difficulty was basically one not of aptitude, but of defining his goals in life, and on that he was badly confused. Fortunately, in this case, the Hillel rabbi on the campus was a man of religious understanding and deep human sympathy and was able to be of real assistance to the boy in getting him to stand on his own feet and make his decision for himself. With girls, the problem usually involved marriage, but here too it was basically a question of how one looked upon life and what one expected to get out of it. Capacity for decision is largely dependent on the courage to clarify one's basic goals and to venture much in pursuit of them. This, at bottom, is always a religious problem.

THE Jewish student is of course fully involved in whatever changes are taking place on the campus. The new temper has not passed him by. At Cornell as well as at other institutions which I visited, I found Jewish students deeply interested in religion and ready to implement their interest in various ways. A good deal in this respect depends on the outlook and preoccupations of the Hillel director. But, of course, the real problem for the Jewish student is something that transcends institutions and activities, however worthwhile. The real problem is the meaning of his Jewishness and this problem raises for the Jew of the "younger generation" a bundle of perplexities that his elders only dimly feel and that his non-Jewish contemporaries know little of.

The paradox in which the Jewish student of today is gripped is characterized by the fact that at the very time when his self-affirmation as a Jew has become more assured, his Jewishness has grown more problematical. He knows, accepts, and affirms that he is a Jew—but then what does it mean to be a Jew?

This is the question that, whether they fully realized it or not, seemed to plague the thinking young Jews I met. Wherever I addressed Jewish groups, and whatever happened to be the subject on which I spoke, the talk almost always, before it had gone very far, came round to this question. Clearly my audience could no longer accept, or even understand, the matter-of-fact, pre-critical Jewishness of their immigrant forebears, compounded as that had been of traditional folkways embedded in a rich Yiddish culture. They were, socially and culturally, too thoroughly American for that. Nor could they any longer define their Jewishness in Zionist-nationalist terms. Political Zionism no longer gave them the sense of "belonging" that it had offered so many only a decade before. I did indeed find Jewish students here and there who were looking forward to settling in Israel and who interpreted their Jewishness in terms of this ambition; but they were few, and besides their whole outlook was that of temporary residents in America rather than that of American Jews. The great bulk of the Jewish students, however sympathetic to Zionism and to the State of Israel, simply could not think that way; they just could not understand their Jewishness in terms of some extraterritorial relation to the "Jewish state." Indeed, in this matter there was virtually no dissent worth mentioning.

It was not hard to bring the profound dilemma of contemporary Jewish existence out into the open and draw its implications. The untenability, indeed the meaninglessness, of "secular Judaism"—that is, of the attempt to understand Jewishness in wholly non-religious terms—was widely acknowledged, although sometimes rather reluctantly. The conclusion—that Jewish existence could make final sense only in religious terms—was less widely understood or accepted, but at least it was discussed. In fact, I found the whole level of discussion very different from that with which we of an earlier generation were familiar. It was no longer "sociological," in the bad sense of the term. Sociology, of course, was taken to be relevant, as indeed it is, but the limits of sociological analysis seemed to be much better understood. Im-

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plicitly or explicitly, the realm of discourse was essentially religious, and many students came to recognize this by themselves.

In an article that appeared in COMMENTARY nearly three years ago ("Has Judaism Still Power to Speak?" May 1949), I pointed out that "corresponding to the Christian affirmation of the non-Jew, there is for the Jew not merely Jewish religion; there are also the *ersatz*-Jewish faiths—Jewish nationalism, culture, social service, 'anti-defamation'—all moving on the secular level, all unable or unwilling to break through to the religious." These faiths, I would say on the basis of my recent experience, are fast losing their appeal. As a result, the Jewishness that was mere matter of fact to their ancestors, that became secularized and increasingly contentless to their parents, is emerging before them as a matter that goes to the heart of existence —a matter of religious decision.

INSTITUTIONAL religion and ritual observance appeared to constitute a particular problem for many of the Jewish students whom I met. They found it very difficult to make any correlation between their religious concern and the kind of thing they encountered in the synagogues and temples they occasionally visited. They tended to attribute this to the stultifying effects of institutionalism as such. They did not absolutely deny the necessity of institutional forms of religious expression, but I do not think I met a single Jewish student who felt quite at home with them. *Kashrut* and the Sabbath I found to be observed little if at all, but the problem of observance did bother a great many young men and women. Why should these ancient folkways be necessary today? How can the performance or non-performance of certain otherwise meaningless acts be essential to one's religious existence as a Jew? And what acts *are* essential—the entire Shulhan Aruch, or whatever each individual may pick and choose for himself?

These questions kept on recurring through all our discussions. I noted a certain polarization among the students. There were some, very few, who were rigidly observant, sometimes in a rather compulsive way. I recall one young man, a graduate student in psychology, who defiantly proclaimed that he was "100 per cent observant" and in the same breath assured me that his "religion" had nothing to do with his studies. "They're two different worlds," he kept on insisting. "One's got nothing to do with the other. What's logic in one isn't logic in the other, and vice versa; you can't mix them." I had been speaking on religious presuppositions in the social sciences, and that was his answer to me. He was not alone in his notions. But much more typical was the boy who wanted to know why, since religion was "all in the mind," any overt observances at all were necessary. "Why do we need physical reminders of spiritual beliefs?" was his rather sophisticated way of putting it. My explanation of Franz Rosenzweig's approach of personal appropriation through the act* impressed him and other students, but even they seemed more convinced intellectually than changed in their basic attitude. Clearly, the essential tradition of Jewish Law has not been made intelligible, let alone acceptable, to even the religiously concerned young Jews of our time.

Another source of perplexity that always came to the surface in discussion was the inner relation of Judaism and Christianity, so alike in structure of faith and yet so different in outlook and vocation. And the question was raised almost as frequently by Christians as by Jews. I remember the daughter of a minister, a very sensitive girl at one of the women's colleges in the East where I spent a few days last year. The discussion after my lecture lasted far into the night. Next morning, she and her friends appeared at the breakfast table with a notebook full of questions which they had sat up until early morning to formulate. Almost every question dealt with Judaism and Christianity in their inner relations. Obviously, at a certain point of religious self-understanding it becomes as necessary for the Christian to make sense of Judaism in terms of his own

* See my article on Franz Rosenzweig in COMMENTARY, December 1950.

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commitment as it does for the Jew to make sense of Christianity in terms of his. Both Jews and Christians found Franz Rosenzweig's teaching on the question, which I presented to them in various ways and in various contexts, most illuminating and satisfactory.

More than one Jewish student complained bitterly to me about the lack of understanding which the religiously concerned young people so frequently meet in the older generation, especially among those who should be their spiritual advisers and directors. There is a real gap between the generations. What these young people take as significant in religious life—personal confrontation with God, decision, commitment—seems to many of their elders to be mere "mysticism," while the busy externalism of the typical synagogue-community center appears to the best of the young people as precisely the kind of institution-mindedness they suspect and dislike. Where there is an understanding Hillel director on the campus, the plight of such students is much mitigated, but Hillel directors of this kind are not too common, and besides there are a number of important campuses, especially the smaller colleges and girls' schools, without Hillel establishments at all. The Jewish student who has been stirred by an authentically religious impulse often finds himself painfully unsupported; he has no one to turn to who will understand, and he has little to read, at least little that has been made available by religious and educational groups, that will sustain and clarify his commitment. The latter lack has to some extent been remedied by a number of books published in the course of the past year, but the situation has not been radically changed. The religiously concerned Jewish student is still obliged to find his way without much guidance from those to whom he has every right to look for help.

If we take the young men and women whom I met at Cornell as in some way reflecting a new type of student emerging in this mid-century decade, how can this new student best be characterized? He is neither a flippant, wisecracking smart aleck nor a close-lipped, brooding introvert. He is certainly not, reports to the contrary notwithstanding, a terrorized, browbeaten victim of "McCarthyism"; I never met one such poor creature on any campus. The new type of student, if there is any such thing, is one who is no longer so sure that he has solved the riddle of the universe. He has little or none of the cocksureness and smugness that characterized my own generation at college. He knows that he and his world are in a dreadful predicament, and he more than suspects that this predicament is a reflection and projection of a permanent crisis in human life. He is trying to understand himself and his world and to find a ground of security beyond all partial securities. He is "looking for a faith," as the recent *Time* survey puts it, but bitter experience has taught him to suspect high-sounding slogans and utopian visions. The faith he is looking for must promise less but give more. In his reaction against the emphasis on social action of the previous generation, he is often in real danger of trailing off into some irrelevant and irresponsible form of private spirituality. But at his best, he understands his place in the world and demands of the faith for which he is looking that it be relevant to the basic decisions of responsible living. He does not have the answers; he is struggling even to formulate the questions. But he knows there are questions and he hopes there are answers. Deep in his heart, there are beginning to form the outlines of a great Perhaps that already points beyond itself.

He has many shortcomings and deficiencies, this new student of our time. His "mildness," his searching, his silence, will not appeal to those who remember the fire-eater of yesterday. But, as Ludwig Lewisohn has pointed out in the pages of this magazine —which, incidentally, I found, on the campuses I visited, has played a significant positive role among both students and younger faculty in exciting and feeding interest in moral and religious issues—the student of the present-day generation has one great and overriding virtue: he is "accessible to good."

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ISRAEL'S PRESS MIRRORS THE NEW STATE

What the Papers Say and Who Reads Them

ERNEST STOCK

IN ISRAEL today, as in no other country, the old dictum might well be changed to read, "Show me your press, and I will tell you what you are."

First of all, in the churning melting pot that is Israel in 1952, to read a Hebrew newspaper at all is one unfailing sign that one is no longer a mere greenhorn but a full-fledged Israeli, a firmly rooted member of the community. If the newcomer is young and diligent, it may take only a few months until he has acquired enough linguistic proficiency to pass the threshold. But often it takes years, or it never comes to pass at all. For reading a newspaper requires far more skill than merely speaking the language. Everyday spoken Hebrew—not unlike spoken English—is a kind of "basic Hebrew" consisting of perhaps a hundred roots and a set of conjunctions, prefixes, and suffixes. In good newspaper writing several times that number of roots are employed.

Further, when you note what Hebrew paper the man sitting in the bus is reading, you can tell which one of the political-economic-religious groups that make up the many-stranded community he has aligned himself with—and nine out of ten Israelis, even among the newcomers, have not failed to make a choice. The bus driver who pulls *Al Hamishmar* out of his pocket between runs *ipso facto* belongs to Mapam and is probably reading all about "American imperialism." The kibbutznik reading *Hatzofeh* is without doubt a member of a religious settlement, and the woman who leaves *Kol Ha'am* behind her on the train is no less a Communist than her counterpart who leaves the *Daily Worker* in the New York subway. A reader of the independent *Ha'aretz*, on the other hand, demonstrates his adherence to the middle classes, or else he does not consider that the output of his party press offers a sufficiently balanced diet.

Israel's wide spectrum of daily papers, ranging all the way from farthest right through the sober, thoughtful center to the extreme left (with an offshoot in the direction of religion), mirrors the turbulent, many-sided kaleidoscopic Israeli scene—the bewildering diversity of political convictions; the tension and acerbity that pervade public life; and, happily, in some papers at least, the wry humor with which Israelis are still capable of viewing their toils: as when Uzi, *Ha'aretz*'s irrepressible adolescent commentator, announces that a new tax on auto owners for the use of municipal water in their radiators will be followed shortly by a tax on bathers for use of the city's sewage at the beach. The press reflects, too, Israel's hunger for contact with the world abroad, and, most recently, for the strengthening of the ties that connect it with America. The Friday supplements, equivalent to Sunday editions in the United States, carry entire pages of articles translated from the New York *Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, *Newsweek*, and

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THE traveler who likes to orient himself in new surroundings by glancing through a sheaf of local newspapers is likely to find it tough going in Israel, even if he is up on contemporary Hebrew journalese; for the organs of a dozen political parties, and of a dozen immigrant groups of different backgrounds, all seem to have quite varying notions of what is newsworthy and why. ERNEST STOCK, who spent his first year out of the Columbia University School of Journalism working in Israel as a writer on the Jerusalem *Post* and correspondent for the United Press, offers here a brief tour through Israel's journalistic maze, in which we learn a good deal about the press, and not a little about the new state and its politics. Mr. Stock, who was born in Germany and came here as a boy, is a graduate of Princeton University, and now works with the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation in New York.

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Time, along with selections from the British, French, and sometimes the Russian press. Reports on Israel which appear in American papers are often cabled in full to Tel Aviv and published there the next day.

For the past year, the press has also been an index to the deterioration of morale under the pressure of increasing shortages. The note of triumph that was once the dominant theme has given way to criticism, exhortation, and at best a cautious optimism. News of major crime, once a rarity, has become commonplace. In 1949 a rape-murder case in Tel Aviv still caused a sensation which lasted for months; today only slightly less serious crimes create barely a ripple. And the letters-to-the-editor columns are an endless series of grievances and complaints.

EIGHTEEN daily newspapers are published in Israel; their total circulation, according to a UNESCO survey released in 1951, is close to 250,000. This figure in itself does not stamp the Israeli as the voracious reader he is reputed to be (New York's eight million inhabitants buy over five million papers daily), but it must be remembered that Israeli newspapers are expensive—ten cents a copy—and therefore one copy may serve a number of readers. Many communal settlements subscribe to but one or two copies of a paper, but dozens of members read it on the bulletin board or in the common reading room. Moreover, because of the shortage of newsprint, papers have not been able to increase their press runs since 1949, and circulations have therefore remained all but static. All papers are permitted only a single edition of four pages daily, except on Fridays, when six or eight pages is the rule.

Six of the dailies are foreign-language papers—two German and one each Arabic, French, Hungarian, and English; together they account for somewhat less than 100,000 of the total circulation. In addition, scores of semi-weekly, weekly, and monthly journals are published in a dozen languages, among them Yiddish and Polish. Many of these journals are politically subsidized and frankly intended to influence new immigrants in the direction of a particular party.

Among the Hebrew dailies, the two most widely read are both independent. *Ma'ariv* ("Evening"), with the largest single circulation in Israel, is an afternoon tabloid edited according to a formula long successfully applied in the United States, making liberal use of large headlines, photographs, signed columns, attacks on the government, and a measure of all-around sensationalism; the guttural cry of the tiny Yemenite newsboys —*"Ma'areev!"*—has become as much a part of the street scene in Tel Aviv as the cry of the muezzin in the Moslem cities across Israel's border. (The Jerusalem *Post* recently asked why the newsboys seem to be getting smaller and smaller. Answer: It is a publishers' trick to make their papers appear larger.) Founded in 1948, *Ma'ariv* sells more than 40,000 copies and has far outstripped the older afternoon tabloid, *Yediot Achronot* ("Latest News"). *Ma'ariv*'s editor, Dr. Azriel Carlebach, an erudite former rabbinical student, is probably the most astute journalist in Israel today; his paper makes money (not a mean feat in Israel, where less than 15 per cent of all newspaper space is given over to advertising), and his staff is the highest paid among the country's 275 registered professional journalists. Although some of Dr. Carlebach's colleagues tend to dismiss *Ma'ariv* as "not a serious newspaper," the more detached observer sees in it proof that independent journalism has a future in Israel.

Equally impressive is the success of *Ha'aretz* ("The Land") which has a circulation of about 25,000 (while the circulation figures supplied by the various party papers are notoriously inaccurate, *Ha'aretz* is able to furnish figures that are certified by reliable audit). Read by men and women of all shades of opinion, *Ha'aretz* is frequently called the *New York Times* of Israel and enjoys the respect accorded to a national institution. Actually, its prototype is more likely to be found elsewhere: less benign and a good deal more warm-blooded than the *Times*, *Ha'aretz* manages to be urbane and dignified in the tradition of the great journals of Berlin, Frankfort, and Vienna of

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a bygone era. Like them, *Ha'aretz* can be long-winded and ponderous in one column (its editorials often read like economic treatises by a college professor), entertaining in easy feuilleton-style in the next.

Ha'aretz's independence consists not in its not having any political views—a virtual impossibility in Israel—but in its not being the organ of a particular party. It is decidedly on the conservative side by Israeli standards, and in last year's elections supported the General Zionists: the editor, Gershon Schocken, explained that the paper, though not unreservedly behind the party's free enterprise policies, felt that a stronger conservative party was needed to counterbalance Mapai. Unlike *Haboker* ("The Morning"), the organ of the General Zionists, *Ha'aretz* shows considerable sympathy for the cooperative and collective sectors of the economy. Its criticism of the government is moderate in tone and, what is more, usually based on solid ground. In this as in other respects, *Ha'aretz* brings to the Israeli scene a touch of that sweet reasonableness which is so wanting in many areas of the politics-ridden country.

On Fridays, *Ha'aretz* features a literary page which both for the level of its contributions and the range of its interest is second to none published in the United States. The appetite of the Israeli reader for news of the intellectual and artistic worlds is limitless; to satisfy it, *Ha'aretz*, like its contemporaries, resorts frequently to translations from papers abroad. It also has its own correspondents in those capitals which are of prime importance to Israel, and last year sent its most talented young reporter, Arieh Gelblum, on a tour of the Western world.

Not far behind *Ha'aretz* among the morning papers is *Davar* ("The Word"), the organ of Histadrut and an institution in its own right. During most of the twenty-seven years of its existence, *Davar* was the labor daily in Israel and fought—as its editors would put it—in the vanguard of the pioneering element. After the split of the Israeli labor movement into two major parties, *Davar*, condemned to straddling the fence, began to lose its cutting edge. The left-wing Mapam set up its own paper, *Al Hamishmar* ("On Guard"), while Mapai, in need of an organ with which to counter the stinging thrusts of the Mapam mouthpiece, went into business with an afternoon daily, *Hador* ("The Generation"). *Davar* continues to speak for labor in general—a function which has since become somewhat of an anachronism. The paper is of course still widely read among Histadrut stalwarts, and the old-timers among them hold it in deep affection. But to the outsider this labor paper—a trade union paper, more nearly—without polemics and without the urbanity of a *Ha'aretz*, appears a trifle dull. Much space is given to organizational news, to labor news from abroad, to eulogies of labor figures and observances of anniversaries, and to the kind of theorizing which the *sabra* generation irreverently describes as *Tzionut* —"Zionistics."

Some say that *Davar* has never been the same since the days of its founder and first editor, Berl Katznelson. After Katznelson's death, Salman Rubashov (now Shazar) was *Davar*'s editor for a spell; he later became minister of education in the first Ben Gurion cabinet. At one time, years ago, Moshe Shertok (now Sharett) served as an editor. At present the paper is run by a board which is part Mapai and part Mapam in its composition. *Davar*'s printing plant is the most up to date in the Middle East. Recently *Davar* perfected a process permitting the linotype setting of Hebrew characters with vowel markings (usually omitted) and began to publish a voweled edition for immigrants called *Omer* ("Speech"). From *Davar*'s presses also come a weekly children's newspaper, a monthly journal for women, and an illustrated weekly, *D'var Hashavua* ("The Weekly Word"). *Davar* also has a literary section of high merit which regularly features rhymed comments on the current scene by the gifted poet Nathan Alterman.

A well-edited literary section also distinguishes *Al Hamishmar*, the Mapam daily, though it is often overweighted with social

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significance and socialist doctrine. Here a review of Habimah's production of Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro* is apt to regret that "Habimah does not stress the social aspects of this play" or to reproach the director for "ignoring the historic light shed on the hero and on the events of the period, and bringing into prominence instead the essentially entertaining elements of the play." Doctrine and dialectics also figure heavily in the paper's editorials, which, on the domestic side, oppose the government, and are vehemently anti-Western in dealing with world politics. Most American visitors, if they could read Hebrew, would be astonished at the bitterness of the paper's attacks on the American government. It sees the bogey of American imperialism the world over and pictures the United States as engaged in unending plots against Israel. According to *Al Hamishmar,* the dispute last spring over the Huleh drainage was welcomed, if not actually engineered, by the United States as a means of "maintaining tension for the sake of widening the gulf between Israel and Syria and subjecting both to the mercy of American policy." On Prime Minister Ben Gurion's visit to the United States, the paper remarked that it was "another phase in the process of integrating Israel in the imperialist bloc which is preparing for war." All this would spell out the Cominform line almost to a T, were it not that the paper in the same breath chides the Prime Minister for failing to "implant in American Jewry a feeling of duty toward the homeland." With a tenacity that is not without a certain quixotic pathos, Mapam still clings to the belief that Stalinist Communism and Zionist nationalism are quite compatible, and its newspaper baits America's foreign policy on one page while calling for unlimited immigration (financed with American money) on the next.

Even further to the left is *Kol Ha'am,* the Communists' "Voice of the People." Its tone is a good octave shriller than that of the Mapam organ, but its circulation is considerably lower. While *Al Hamishmar* is reported to sell between 6,000 and 8,000 copies, *Kol Ha'am* prints no more than 2,000, and at one time copies were distributed free among new immigrants. The paper's chief claim to distinction has been the libel suit brought against it by Mr. Ben Gurion, who sometime in 1949 decided that he was being called a traitor to his country once too often. The suit dragged on almost interminably, with the Prime Minister himself taking the witness stand for five hours at a time, until last summer a verdict of guilty was handed down by Israel's juryless courts. *Kol Ha'am* was fined 150 pounds and ordered to publish the judgment in two successive editions.

Although this was the first instance in which the Prime Minister was the plaintiff, libel suits are a frequent hazard of Israeli journalism, and they would be even more frequent if Israeli lawyers were as quick to detect a libelous phrase as some of their specialized American colleagues. One interesting suit was brought early in 1951 against *Herut* ("Freedom"), the organ of the rightist Freedom party, by an agricultural collective near Haifa. *Herut* had published a report by its Haifa correspondent that the settlement had expelled from its midst an old woman whose son, a member of the settlement, had been killed in the war with the Arabs. The correspondent added that he had seen the woman "lying in the street, with blood spouting from her mouth." The headline to the story referred to the incident of the concubine in Gibeah (Judges 19), one of the strongest descriptions of wickedness in the Bible. During the trial, it was brought out that the correspondent had not in fact witnessed the incident, and that his report was considerably less than accurate. A colleague came to his defense by testifying that even the best reporters sometimes write in the first person about something they have not seen themselves, but the court awarded damages.

Among the remaining Hebrew dailies, *Hatzofeh* ("The Observer") mirrors the views of the more liberal religious parties (Hapoel Hamizrachi and Mizrachi), while the ultra-religious Agudat Yisrael and Poalei Agudat Yisrael each publish a daily of their own in Jerusalem, *Hakol* ("The Voice")

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and *Hamodia* ("The Announcer"). Both of these are small in format and limited in circulation and scope. *Hatzofeh*, on the other hand, takes a lively and quite often enlightened part in all issues, domestic and foreign. Occasionally the paper waxes overzealous in playing its role of guardian of the public morals, as when it condemned the folk dance festival held annually at Kibbutz Dalia because, it asserted, the pleasure enjoyed by the spectators was not *simcha shel mitzva* ("joy of fulfilling religious obligation"), citing various Biblical texts to prove that the inhabitants of Ephraim, where Dalia is situated, had always been partial to idolatry and other ungodly ways.

The outsider who is not himself committed to any one point of view will find in almost every one of the party publications something to enlist his sympathy. *Hatzofeh*'s appeal for the primacy of Jewish spiritual values in the state makes ample sense; so does the General Zionists' insistence in *Haboker* that the country's division into economic sectors and the class differences that result should be done away with; and *Al Hamishmar* strikes a responsive chord when it urges a return to pioneering and more settlement on the land. Only when such views as these are elevated to the status of cure-alls for all the social and economic ills that beset the country does one accustomed to a less partisan press tend to demur.

But the average Anglo-Saxon in Israel (the term "Anglo-Saxon" is used to designate Jews from the English-speaking countries) is rarely able to follow the vagaries of the party press. He will rely for his news on the English-language Jerusalem *Post*—the only daily of importance that appears in the capital. Founded in 1933 by Gershon Agronsky (now Agron), the paper was known as the *Palestine Post* until Independence Day 1950 when it went along with a widespread Israeli custom and changed its name. At the beginning of its career the *Post* catered mainly to the bureaucracy and military, but in the later days of the Mandate it adopted a stinging anti-British policy. On February 1, 1948, its plant on Hasolel Street was partly wrecked by an explosion in which two employees were killed and three others maimed. According to the official version, the culprits were Arabs. Among Jews, it was rumored that British Army personnel were responsible.

Wherever the truth lies, the bombing testified to the power that was the *Palestine Post* in the last days of the Mandate. The paper was hated by British and Arabs alike, but with the Jewish population it enjoyed tremendous prestige. Not the least factor contributing to that prestige was the presence on the staff of a non-Jewish ex-British official who wrote a column under the pseudonym of David Courtney. Day after day, Courtney's "Column One" blasted away at British policy with brilliant logic, deadly sarcasm, and a consummate mastery of the King's English. During the siege of Jerusalem, Courtney worked miracles for the population's morale, and his name became a symbol of the justice of the Jewish cause.

Some weeks ago, a six-year-old who had been playing near the *Post*'s reconstructed plant came running home with the cry, "Father, they're bombing the *Post* again!" The boy had heard a crash, but this time no dynamite was involved. A reader had smashed the windows of the press room with stones, shouting, "The *Post* is for Ben Gurion, Mapai, and Mapam!"

TODAY the Post *is* outspokenly for Ben Gurion and Mapai (hardly for Mapam), and, as the inevitable price, it has slipped from its Olympian heights into the melee of partisanship. Many of its readers belong to the middle-class element from Central Europe and have long since parted ways with the paper's policies; but they continue to read it faithfully as a reliable medium of information in a language they know how to read. (The two German papers each appear on but a single sheet on weekdays and are frequently late with their foreign news and deficient in local coverage.) David Courtney's influence also has waned; his column now deals almost exclusively with world affairs, and here his views are still those of the left-wing liberal of the early postwar

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period, scarcely touched by the events in Eastern Europe and Korea. Courtney's ideas are often in conflict with the *Post*'s pro-Western editorials; he has said that he prefers to "concentrate on the follies of the West" and to leave it to others to "concentrate on the sinfulness of Moscow."

But the *Post* has gained in influence in one important respect since the state was established: it now serves as the mirror of Israel's daily life to the diplomatic corps and to the ever growing number of non-diplomatic visitors. It is studied as carefully in the Russian and French legations as in the United States embassy; few diplomats accredited to Israel, if any, read Hebrew. For those who are interested in keeping up with the opinions of its contemporaries, the *Post* prints each day a summary of editorials in the Hebrew press. And plans are said to be under consideration to publish a weekly air-mail edition for subscribers in the United States.

Although the Jerusalem *Post*'s relation to Mapai is more tenuous than that of the party organ, *Hador,* it has the reputation of being well informed on government moves and policy. The New York *Herald Tribune*'s Kenneth Bilby was exaggerating when, in his book *New Star in the Near East,* he called the *Post* the "servant of the government," but it is common knowledge that its columns are sometimes used by the Foreign Office to get ideas or reactions across to one or the other of the foreign emissaries. The *Post* also has the most complete coverage on news from abroad, especially from America (it is the only paper in Israel to pay attention to baseball scores, and even publishes brief accounts of World Series games).

THE Americans on the *Post*'s lower-echelon staff are not so involved in the political scene as their Hebrew-writing colleagues and therefore manage a certain degree of detachment which shows up now and then in a clever headline, in a "box" featuring an incongruous incident, or in the whimsical "Keeping Posted" column.

By contrast, the reporters and editorialists of the party press are for the most part men who served their apprenticeships as much in the maelstrom of party politics as in city rooms and editorial offices. They are deeply committed to their papers' points of view, and their perceptions are inevitably colored. Tel Aviv newspaper offices have none of the nervous beat-the-deadline atmosphere so familiar to movie-goers, but in one respect they are more lively than their American counterparts: the Israeli newspaperman feels personally involved in the events he reports, and newspaper offices are the scenes of earnest discussions on issues of the day. The parliamentary correspondent of *Ha'aretz* once said to me, "I love this Knesset of ours as a young man loves his bride"—a far cry from the cynics of our Congressional press galleries.

Nor are the Israelis affected by that obsession with "facts" which causes American editors to insist that the spelling of each name be checked and double-checked before it goes into print. A good bit of material in their press is based on pure speculation. Among favorite subjects for crystal-gazing have been the intentions of the powers with regard to the Middle East (does the United States wish to see Israel included in a Mediterranean pact?), chances for peace or war with Arab states, especially with Jordan, and the reported differences between President Truman and the State Department over policy on Israel. Some of the most convenient pegs on which to hang "think pieces" of this sort are provided by the comings and goings of foreign dignitaries, such as the UN's Trygve Lie, Britain's General Sir Brian Robertson, or America's George C. McGhee. Often the speculation and prognostication is signed by a "political" or "diplomatic" correspondent; some of it is simply attributed to the ubiquitous "reliable sources." When the Vatican was taking a vigorous interest in the internationalization of Jerusalem, the press focused its attention on the person of the French consul in that city and soon had him tagged as the unofficial eye and ear of the Pope in the Holy City. He was also suspected of being the key figure in an effort on the part of France to recoup her traditional posi-

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tion as protector of the Holy Places. When it became known that M. Neuville was planning a trip to Italy in the summer of 1950, the Jerusalem correspondents were quick to suggest that he was going to confer with the Pope about the future of the city. The consul finally gave a luncheon for the press at which he explained that he merely planned to attend a meeting of paleontologists in Florence. An ardent Palestinographer, he spent the rest of the press conference propounding his theories on prehistoric Palestine.

DESPITE the bitter partisanship of the party press, a basic single-mindedness can be discerned in Israel's dailies when they sense a threat to the country's prestige or territorial integrity. The Huleh dispute was a case in point. In such an instance, the non-partisanship of the party organs would have surprised even a Senator Vandenberg. There was absolute unanimity on the score that the Huleh region and its development were of vital importance to Israel and that there must be no giving in to Syria's show of force, just as earlier there had been a chorus of resounding "no's" when the UN voted to internationalize Jerusalem. The same single-mindedness prevailed for more than three years in favor of unlimited immigration. *Ha'aretz* was first, late last year, to raise doubts as to the wisdom of letting the flood continue unchecked in the midst of economic crisis.

Another common denominator is the satisfaction shown over all evidence of progress in the country, from the addition of a new merchant vessel to an increase in the output of tomatoes. On the anniversary of independence last spring, the papers all took time out to review the achievements of the past three years. The theme was the same throughout, though with characteristic variations. *Ha'aretz*, taking the broad and sober view, called attention to the difficulties yet to be overcome in the economic, cultural, and social spheres, and urged one and all not to relax their efforts. *Davar*, ever conscious of its pioneering role, took its cue from the establishment of two new settlements on Independence Day and urged the Jewish Agency to set as its goal double the present number of villages. *Al Hamishmar* warned that the country must preserve its hard-won independence and castigated a statement by Ben Gurion on the affinity between Israel and the United States as a step in the wrong direction. *Haboker*, long disturbed by the class consciousness which it believes is being fostered by the labor parties, urged the country to rise above the dissensions which threaten it from within. *Hakol*, the Agudat Yisrael organ, emphasized that political liberation was not an end in itself and deplored the fact that Israel had not made use of its freedom to come close to ancient Jewish tradition. *Herut*, on the other hand, paid tribute to the underground struggle which had preceded independence (and in which its followers in the Irgun had played a prominent part). Herut being the one party which still covets Trans-Jordan, the paper recalled that there are still "areas of our homeland" which await liberation. *Kol Ha'am*, finally, published a manifesto by the Israel Communist party calling for "true independence."

On such days the impression that here are the organs of so many separate societies, each fighting a separate struggle of its own, gives way to the realization that there is, fortunately, a strong underpinning of solidarity after all. Israel would be a dull place, indeed, if unanimity were suddenly to become the rule in its press, and the diversity of printed views is a fine measure of its air of freedom. But a little more solidarity, on more frequent occasions, would still be an encouraging sign.

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THE GOLDEN YEARS

A Story

SYLVIA ROTHCHILD

IF ANYONE had told Simon Halpern a year ago that he would soon spend every day sitting on a park bench instead of in front of a sewing machine, he would surely have laughed. "What will I do all day?" he asked when his wife suggested that he retire. "Do you want to make a rag out of me? What kind of person can sit with empty hands all day?"

"You don't earn any more than you would get if you stayed at home," she reminded him.

"So I don't earn as much as I used to, would you like me to go out and steal a little more?"

"We won't talk about it any more," his wife answered; "be well, and work as hard as you like."

Three days before his seventieth birthday, however, he came home from work early with the fingers of his right hand stiff and immovable. He insisted that it would be all right in a few days. But his hand did not improve. No one believed it would and after a few weeks, though he still assured everyone that he would be back at work soon, he too doubted that it would be possible.

Simon did not change his routine any more than was necessary. His wife knew that he could not. He awoke at five-thirty just as he had done for fifty years. Each morning he was surprised anew to remember that he had no place to go, that the keys to the shop were returned to the boss, that the subway would grind out of the station without him. It was Sunday every day of the week but he refused to think about it. He washed and shaved carefully, brushed his thin iron-gray hair with the wispy, ivory-backed brush his wife had given him before his marriage. Then he took his false teeth from the glass where they were soaking all night, and put them in his mouth deliberately. They had never fit properly and his gums were always sore where they rubbed against them but he wore them stubbornly even though no one but his family would see him.

He took his prayer shawl and philacteries from their velvet cases, wrapped his prayer shawl around his shoulders, and wound his philacteries carefully around his left arm and again on his brow. Then he said the morning prayer. He loved the morning meeting with his God better than any other. Praying while the streets were empty and the houses still with sleep made him feel as though he alone in the world had the Lord's attention.

Though he relished the privacy of the morning, he didn't mind sharing it with his two-year-old grandson. Many mornings the little boy would climb out of his crib without waking his mother and run into the kitchen to see his grandfather. Simon would take a fresh diaper off the line that was strung across the bathroom and struggle with his stiff fingers until he changed the boy's pajamas. Then he would reach into the oven where his wife stored the cookies she baked each Friday and give the child one for each hand. He would help him up into a kitchen chair before he began his prayer, turning frequently to look at the soft round face still puffed with sleep. The boy couldn't sit still for long. He would jump down and pull his grandfather's trousers and the fringes of his shawl. Sometimes Simon prayed with the boy perched on his shoulder like a monkey.

THIS is the second story by SYLVIA ROTHCHILD to appear in these pages; her first, "The Mothers," was published in last October's issue. Mrs. Rothchild was born in Brooklyn in 1923, and is at present living in Sharon, Massachusetts.

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If the child moved or tried to turn the pages of the prayer book, Simon made a humming noise with his lips closed and didn't interrupt the prayer.

As soon as the boy had been dressed and given his breakfast, Simon would wheel him down to the park in his stroller. They didn't stop at the shelter where all the men gathered, but stayed in the sun where there were mothers and other little children. When the weather was warm, he would lie down on the grass and let the boy jump all over him. He would snatch him up in the middle of their play and kiss the nape of his neck, bite into his buttocks and pretend to devour him.

On rainy days they sat together at the bedroom window, watching the cars, or they squatted on the linoleum in the living room to build houses of blocks and dominoes. His daughter Evelyn came into the room every few minutes to say, "Watch yourself, Pa. You'll hurt your hand, Pa." Or she would call from the kitchen, "Why don't you leave him alone for a minute, Pa. Don't kiss him so much!" Simon often thought that if not for the baby the first months at home would have been unbearable. He kept hoping that he could make the little boy his; that with sheer love alone he could woo him to his way of life.

But they didn't let him have the boy long enough. Once he overheard his daughter telling a friend on the phone: "If we can only get Allan away from Pa. It drives me crazy. He gave the baby a glass of coffee this morning. Imagine! If he turns over in his crib, Pa is there to see what's the matter. It makes me so nervous." Three months later his son-in-law came home from Japan and resumed his civilian life and they went to California to live.

Simon was miserable, though people kept congratulating him on having his apartment to himself, on no longer having his sleep and meals disturbed. He and his wife found themselves in an endless, frightening silence. She suffered from arthritis and was in bed a good part of the day. She would lie down as soon as her work was done. He sat in the chair beside her bed reading the Yiddish newspapers he bought every day. Sometimes the whole afternoon would pass while she lay dozing in the bed and he sat at the window, listening to the bathroom faucet drip, the radiators knocking, and the footsteps of the people who lived above them.

One afternoon he offered to cook the supper, just to relieve the monotony of the day. He bought what was necessary at the corner grocery store and made a *mamelige*, a pudding of yellow corn meal, which they had not eaten since Evelyn came to stay with them. "How can you eat that? It's as heavy as lead," she would complain. He thought of her as he poured the melted butter over it and heaped little mounds of farmer's cheese and sour cream next to it. Then he broiled a herring on top of the stove, ignoring, as his wife could not do, the grease that splattered all over the stove and wall. "Gussie," he called, "it's ready." He blessed the bread and the two began to eat. They struggled with the portions he set for them. The *mamelige* was lumpy and the herring burned the blisters in his mouth. After four or five bites, he pushed the dish aside and his wife watching him did the same.

"It's good, Simon, it's very good, but I'm just not hungry. One doesn't get an appetite lying in bed."

"No," he said, "it's not your fault. It isn't good; it isn't good at all. Tell me why is it that in American nothing has any taste?"

"Why pick on America?" she asked. "Things have a taste here. It's we who have no taste. Who says food has to taste good to people who have no teeth, no hands, no feet? Don't pick on America. America has nothing to do with it."

Simon went back to the park the next day. He felt foolish going by himself just to sit but he found forty or fifty men there already. They sat on the benches under the shelter near the mall where the band played in the summertime. Some read newspapers; some played checkers or cards; some talked excitedly in little groups and others sat with blank pallid faces neither looking nor seeing. He found an empty bench and sat down

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to read his paper. When he was finished he got up and walked slowly around the walks with his hands locked behind his back, stooping forward as though he were looking for something on the ground. It was hard to make the morning pass just walking, and he finally returned to the shelter to find someone to talk to.

A plump, bearded man sat beside him and smiled. "You're a newcomer here, aren't you?" he asked Simon. "What are you on?"

"What do you mean 'on'?" Simon asked.

"On," said the man. "On old age, on pension, I mean where do you get money so you can sit in the park?"

Simon was embarrassed. It was not proper to ask a workingman what he earned; that was his own business. Why should a total stranger ask him such a question?

"Don't be ashamed," his bearded friend went on. "We're all the same here. Take me for instance. I used to have a little grocery store, but now I'm on assistance for the blind. I can't complain; they're very nice to me."

But Simon couldn't bring himself to answer him. Instead he asked where the nearest telephone was and went home.

He was about to cross the wide avenue that ran along the park when a car pulled up in front of him. "Simon," his brother called, "what are you doing here in the middle of the day? Jump in. How are you feeling?"

Unwillingly, Simon settled himself in the car beside his brother. "I heard that you finally got smart and joined the loafers," he said with the cigar still in his mouth. "Shall I take you home?"

"Yes," said Simon, "I'm going home." They were in front of the house in two minutes.

"I can't stop now, but tell me, Simon, how are you doing? Do you need some money?"

"I'm doing fine. Everything I have is God's and mine. I don't owe anything and I don't want to owe. I'm satisfied."

"That's also doing? I probably give more away a week than you earn."

Simon fumbled with the door handle but could not open it. "If you had listened to me you wouldn't be a failure."

"You think every workingman is a failure. But there are lots of them in America and I'm there with the others. If I'm satisfied with my life, what do you want from me?"

His brother helped him open the door. "Give my regards to Gussie." he said.

"Who took you home?" his wife asked when he came in.

"Hymie," he said.

"In a new car?" she asked.

"I don't know. All cars look the same."

"It's a new car, Sarah told me. He bought her a new squirrel coat too."

"With all the fat on her she needs a fur coat to keep her warm?"

"It's not what you need but what you want," his wife said quietly.

"I'll tell you what Hymie wants. A little sense and understanding; a little appreciation of what is right and wrong; a few feelings that can't be bought for money. I wouldn't trade one week of my life for all of his, with his comforts."

"No one is asking you to," his wife said with a finality he could not break.

SIMON avoided the bearded man the next day and sat down next to a drawn, sick-looking man wearing an old torn overcoat that was tied together with a safety pin. He greeted him with a nod but when Simon offered him part of his paper he did not answer. Simon decided that he must be deaf and sat down on a bench opposite him to read. He was almost finished when the bearded man came over and greeted him like an old friend. "Come with me," he said, I want you to hear something. It's better than the theater when this bunch gets together. It's something to hear." Simon folded his paper and stuffed it into his pocket and followed him along the walk until they stopped in front of two men who were shouting at each other. One was short and heavy with a thick shock of white hair. He waved his hands wildly as he spoke to a tall, thin man wearing a new hat and coat, well-creased trousers, and polished shoes.

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"Tell me one thing," the short man shouted. "Tell me, do you believe Abraham was the father of his people, tell me do you believe it?"

"All right, so I believe it," the man answered.

"Then agree that today Abraham would be thrown into jail in no time. For what was he? He was the first troublemaker; he was the first revolutionary. He didn't listen to his father; he smashed the idols; he couldn't be satisfied with what he had. Today, you'd holler, Communist. What I'm saying is that Jews aren't supposed to be satisfied. They're supposed to complain. They're supposed to make the world better."

"With your ideas you'll make the world better? I could live without it being so much better," he said, putting his hands into his coat pockets.

A short bald man who was on the outside of the circle, listening, pushed himself forward and in a hoarse, raucous voice called out, "The world will never change and you Communists won't make it any better. Cain killed Abel and since then there's always been fighting and struggling and there always will be fighting and struggling. I'm eighty years old and I've seen something in my time."

The tall man answered first, "You're calling me a Communist? Why don't you listen to what goes on and see who the Communist is here?"

The short man spat on the grass. "What a repulsive bunch you are. You're dead already and you don't know it. Everyone's dead in America. Even my own sons. In my house the father is the revolutionary and the sons are the reactionaries. Is that normal? In my house the television is the Bible and the ball-players are the prophets. For that I say, 'Thank you, America.'"

The circle broke up and someone murmured, "It's a pity he can't afford a ticket right back to his home town. There he would really lick off a good bone; America isn't good enough for him, the big shot."

"Nu," said the bearded man to Simon, "didn't I tell you? What do you think?"

"I don't like Communists," said Simon, "but I like to listen. It's like being back in the market."

"You haven't heard anything till you hear Grossman."

"Who is Grossman?"

"Grossman, you don't know Grossman, he used to be a millionaire. He owned all the Osman furniture stores; even now he's still worth ten thousand. But such a *nudnik* you have to go far to find."

"So what is there to hear if he's such a *nudnik?*"

"Nobody lets him alone, that's the thing. For instance, yesterday after you went away, we were holding our sides laughing. Grossman came along and starts with his story. Grossman has only one story, about his store from the rag business, the apartment on Riverside Drive, summers in Atlantic City and winters in Florida; anything to make us drool. Sometimes he even tells it in English. That's how it was yesterday. He went on and on about the same old thing when Klonsky, he's the one with the white hair you just heard talking, Klonsky asks him, 'Mister,' he says, as if he doesn't know his name. 'What's the matter you can't speak Yiddish so everyone can understand you?' Grossman doesn't flicker an eyelash. He just starts the whole thing over in Yiddish, right from the beginning. I thought Klonsky was going to pull all the hair out of his head. 'Enough!' he shouts at him. 'We just heard the whole thing; once, twice, ten times, fifty times is surely enough.' Then he rubs a little salt on, 'Don't forget,' he tells Grossman, 'millionaires are a dime a dozen in America. All you need is a newspaper stand, a dry-goods store, even a wagon that sells knishes or sweet potatoes and you're all set.' I'm telling you this is the life."

The man in the torn overcoat sat on the bench opposite Simon every day but they never spoke to each other. One morning Simon was surprised to find him with his face red and swollen as though he had been crying. He couldn't help but glance up from his paper every few minutes to look wonder-

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ingly at the unhappy face opposite him. Then he saw that there were tears streaming down the man's face though he made no sound and the expression on his face was unchanged. Simon got up and sat down beside him. "What is the matter?" he asked quietly, not expecting an answer.

"They're sending me away," he said in a whisper. "This is my last day here. Tomorrow they pack me up, and away." The tears then came too quickly and he stopped talking.

"Where?" asked Simon. "Who is doing this?"

He tried to swallow his sobs that emerged like belches. "My own children want to bury me alive. They're sending me to a home." And the tears streamed again.

Simon put his hand on his shoulder. "Don't be foolish," he said. "That's not burying alive. Hundreds and thousands of people are in homes and they live until they die. What's so terrible? Stop crying. It's not such a terrible thing. You may even like it there."

"No," said the man. "No one will come to see me. I'll be as lonely as a stone, all the days and nights. My children won't come and who else do I have? I was the youngest in the family, all, all gone." He almost choked as he pressed the sobs down.

"I'll come," said Simon. "I'll find a few other men here and we'll come to see you. Stop crying." The man moved to the end of the bench to make room for a few other people who had stopped to talk and he huddled there, taking deep breaths to control his tears.

Before Simon left the park, he took out his address book. "What's your name?" he asked the stranger.

"Ziskind," he answered, "Abraham Ziskind."

"And to what home are you going?"

"To Carole Street, near the market," he answered.

"Oh, I know," said Simon. "I've never been there, but I know."

Two weeks later Simon persuaded his friend to go to the home with him. He didn't know the man's name, but when talking to his wife he called him "the Beard." They walked together through the most crowded streets in the neighborhood, past pushcarts, and trucks, down a street where there were not even alleyways between the apartment houses and the street was a gully flanked by two walls. The home was an apartment house like all the others. There were the two marble steps, the same grillwork on the doors and only a small sign saying *Moshav Zekanim* to distinguish it from the houses next to it and opposite it.

"So this is the place," Simon said. "Every year a collector comes and I give him two dollars and I never knew where it went."

THEY pushed the heavy door open and in the small lobby where the other houses had doorbells and letter boxes there was a hole in the wall, about a foot square. A woman stuck her head out and asked, "What do you want?"

"We came to see Mr. Ziskind," Simon said.

"In Room Fourteen," she answered, and her head disappeared from view.

They stood on the threshold looking for someone who would know where Fourteen was. It was quiet except for the noise of pans rattling and water running somewhere in a kitchen and for a moment neither Simon nor the Beard realized that there were several people in the hallway. Under the steps at the back, where there was a door leading to the basement, a shriveled, toothless old lady with a kerchief on her head sat on an apple box. In folding chairs, on both sides men and women sat staring into space like wax figures. A voice at Simon's right called out, *"Vehmen zicht ihr?"* and the Beard answered.

"Ziskind, Room Fourteen."

"Upstairs, the second floor," was the answer.

When they turned to see where the voice was coming from they saw the entrance to a small synagogue, where several men were sitting.

They took the steps slowly. The Beard held the banister on the right and Simon

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held on to the wall. The wall was rough where the paper was torn off in large strips and the steps were worn into shallow bowls. At the turning point on the staircase they left the smells of the first floor—strong odors of disinfectant, food, garbage, and the musty smell of old books from the synagogue—for the dusty smells of carpeting, old sweaty clothes, and improperly washed bathrooms. The Beard held his nose and said, *"Pfui."*

"Never mind," said Simon. "Smell your share and go along."

There was no one in the first room they passed. The next was so crowded with furniture that they had to look carefully before they saw Ziskind sitting with his hands folded and his head down. He wore a skullcap on his head and a dirty tweed jacket over uncreased rayon trousers. He looked as if he had not shaved since he had come to the home. Only a little gray light came down the shaft from the skylight into his room. There was a wall only two feet from his window so that there was nothing to look out upon.

"Hello, how are you?" Simon asked with forced cheerfulness.

Ziskind looked at them for a minute as if wondering whether to answer. "I am just as you see me, just as I look, that's how I am."

Simon and the Beard looked at each other significantly. He looked dreadful, as if he were not much longer for this world. They stayed with him for half an hour. Simon talked all the time and Ziskind seemed apathetic. When they stood to leave, however, he jumped up and seized Simon's right hand in both of his own and said, "I thank you for coming. I didn't think anyone would ever come. God will repay you. Please come again, I beg you."

Simon and his friend didn't talk about the home to the other men but it was on their minds for many days. The Beard, seemingly out of the blue, would ask him, "What kind of slop do you suppose they give them to eat there?"

"How should I know?" Simon would ask irritably, annoyed that he was forced to think about it.

When his wife asked how it was, he said, "How should it be, a lot of old people, that's all."

IT RAINED for a week after they had gone and then Simon's hand became very painful. A month passed before he and the Beard went to see Ziskind again. They found the entrance hall crowded with women and for a moment they thought they had come to the wrong building. Then they noticed the old folks, dressed in good clothes. *"Oi,* it must be a funeral," was the Beard's decision. They went upstairs and found Ziskind just where they had left him.

"What's going on? Somebody went away? Who are all the women?"

"It's nothing; some kind of party. They're charity ladies," said Ziskind.

"So what are you doing here alone when there's a party?" the Beard asked.

"If they want me, they can come and call me," Ziskind answered petulantly.

"Don't be foolish," said the Beard. "If it's a party, maybe there's some schnapps or wine, and lots of pretty young women are there already. Don't be an old fool. Let's go down."

They pulled Ziskind, still unshaven, in dirty, crumpled clothes, down the stairs. The old people were already in the dining room and the women were carrying teacups, glasses, and plates.

"Here are some more," one of the women called as she ran to greet them. "Come, come, come," she said, holding Simon by the arm. "Now don't worry, we saved some cake for you, you're not too late." Simon tried to shake her hand off, but she held him tightly as if he were a little child that might run away. She led them to one of the long tables that were used for meals and pulled the chairs out for them. Another woman in a large feathered hat stood at the head of the room. "My dear friends," she said slowly as though she didn't expect to be understood. "We have come to celebrate some birthdays with you. We want you to know that even in your golden older years you can still have happy birthdays. Let us all rise and sing

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happy birthday to Mrs. Bella Gold, Mr. Abraham Selkin, Mrs. Celia Kroll, and Mrs. Molly Greenstein." Some of the people stood up, but only the guests sang. Then a large cake was brought in and pieces were carried to everyone, with glasses of tea. One of the guests played the piano while the tea and cake were devoured.

"Aren't you eating your cake?" the Beard asked Simon.

"It'll stick in my throat. What kind of foolishness is this? Let's go."

"Wait another minute," said the Beard and proceeded to drink Simon's tea and eat his cake.

"Mr. Goldman," announced the woman at the piano, "will now play for you on his violin."

Mr. Goldman, one of the members of the home, shuffled forward with his violin. He scratched at it for a few minutes and then sat down. Then a tiny woman sang a long song in a thin wavering voice. She had scarcely finished when a man stood up and told an obscene story. Simon got up to leave but the Beard kept motioning for him to sit down.

"What's your hurry, we can stay another minute," he begged.

Ziskind still sipped his tea, looking around at the guests as if they had descended from Mars. Behind him, four women were filling little brown paper bags with candy, nuts, and tangerines. Simon remembered filling such bags himself for his grandson's birthday party a few months before.

The people laughed at the story-teller and he was so encouraged that he did a *kazatska* and then sang a *double-entendre* song called "But I Don't Know How" in a flat, tuneless voice. Simon felt himself quivering with exasperation and shame. He squirmed out of the narrow place behind the chairs and went toward the door. He had almost reached it when he heard a woman's voice call him, "Mister, wait!" He didn't turn and she ran all the way out to the lobby with a little paper bag in her hand. She caught his sleeve breathlessly, and said, "You didn't get your candy, here it is."

"Let me alone," he waved his hand at her; "I don't need any candy." Then he let the door slam behind him.

When he stopped for a traffic light he looked back and saw the Beard hurrying after him as fast as his fat legs would take him.

"What was your hurry?" he asked breathlessly. "You could have waited another minute. We came together, let's go home together."

"I can't stand to see old people get up and make fools of themselves like children. It makes me want to sink into the ground."

"Don't take it to heart, it was just a party. Nothing would be better? At least it shows the women have some respect."

"That's also respect, to make fools of people?"

"Is it their fault if the people are fools? Beggars can't afford to be so proud."

"But when a beggar loses his pride, what is he? A common beggar; it's the beggar that can't afford to lose his pride. And without pride, there's no respect."

"Take that up with Klonsky, I'm not a debater," said the Beard.

WHEN Simon stopped at the bakery on the corner of his street, the Beard continued on to his house. Simon bought a pumpernickel and some rolls and hurried down the block and into the hallway, feeling a little guilty because he had been away longer than usual. He didn't notice the ambulance in front of the house. He climbed the steps to the first floor, pulled his key out of his pocket and pushed it into the lock. It didn't turn properly and he put the bag under his arm and tried to use both hands. Then he realized that he had been closing it instead of opening it. He wondered why his wife had left the door open. He had only opened it a crack when he knew that something was wrong. He heard no voices but he sensed at once that there were people in the house.

He walked through the long foyer quickly but not until he reached the entrance to the kitchen did he see the woman from the

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apartment next to his standing with her hand on the sink. Opposite her a blond young man in a white coat sat in Simon's chair at the kitchen table.

"What are you doing here? What's the matter? Where's my wife?" Simon felt his voice as one does in a nightmare.

"I'm sorry, Mister, but your wife had a heart attack an hour and a half ago. There was nothing we could do when we came. I'm sorry."

"Nothing is the matter with my wife's heart. She has arthritis."

"Sorry, Mister."

"But I was only gone a little while. See, I have the rolls. I was only gone a little while."

Simon stood at the door of their bedroom, his face twisting as if he were struggling to catch his breath.

"Look, Mister, I'm sorry to bother you but would you please sign this form. I've been here an hour already. It'll just take a minute."

Simon sat down to sign. When he finished, the doctor folded the paper and put it into his breast pocket. He put his hand on Simon's shoulder and went out quietly on rubber-soled shoes.

The neighbor still stood near the sink. "She got scared and knocked on my door. I called the emergency. Is there anything I can do?"

"No," said Simon; but then added, "Please send telegrams to my daughters." He hunted in his little book for an address in Washington and another in California. "Please call the synagogue for me, too." The woman took the slips of paper and hurried out. She seemed relieved to have reason to go.

When she left, Simon sat down on the edge of his bed. He reached over across the narrow aisle between the beds and uncovered his wife's pale peaceful face.

"So you are the lucky one," he said. "You found favor in His eyes. Oh that I too could be there safely beside you."

Then he covered his face with his hands to hide the tears, *"Mamele, Mamele,* what will I do now?"

THE FIGURE

DAVID IGNATOW

He was harmless,
but this torn-at-the-knee-and-elbow character,
bearded, rough hat pulled down
over the eyes, his soiled clothes bag
slung upon his back—he was itinerary;
standing still for one idle moment
along the curb, his head turned
gazing at what nobody could see exactly;
still he stood gazing—men passed him by
unheeding, chattering their wares
to one another; this character, silent,
the street busily flowing,
seemed an apostle.

David Ignatow's poetry has appeared in previous issues of Commentary, as well as in numerous other magazines. He was born in Brooklyn in 1914.

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

THE CODE ACCORDING TO MAMA-TANTE-MOM

Some Distinctions Between Bending and Breaking

HARRY GERSH

WHEN my Uncle Itzig was cornered in an argument he had one final answer: Who knows what's right? But actually *he* did. If he didn't, Tante, his wife, let him know immediately.

According to the headlines, and all the best experts, the country is going to the moral or immoral dogs. People have lost the capacity for distinguishing right from wrong, say the authorities, larding their opinions with quotations from Gibbon, Spengler, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Mead, Arnold Toynbee. Everybody gets in this act. President Truman castigates the malefactors of little wealth but great ambitions. Politicians investigate and pray that someone won't investigate them. Educators blame it on the scarcity of grade-school teachers. Theologians say it's the fault of materialism—as what isn't?

The national emergency cries aloud for a moral code, so we are told on all sides. Well, if this is all that is needed, some of us know where to turn. We know a code that works. Proof? I know three families intimately who have lived under this code and none of their members is in jail, under investigation (FBI security investigations don't count), or in bad repute with the neighbors. In fact, half your friends follow the code openly. The other half just follow it, and when they don't they feel haunted—by the spirits of Mama, Tante, and Mom. (Mothers-in-law are called Mom when mothers are called Mama, and vice versa.)

For the sociological record, let us note that Mama, Tante, and Mom were not related, except finally through marriage, and they were brought up in different parts of the world. But their moral views infallibly coincided, without hesitation and, need I say, without consultation. Who has to ask? As if by instinct, they knew what was right and what was wrong. To be sure, their code wasn't as unequivocal and as stern as the West Point code—an officer and cadet does not steal, lie, cheat—but which code has stood the test of modern living better? And I'm sure that Mama, Tante, and Mom have as least as good a chance at Heaven as any five-star general.

Unlike Hillel's, the MTM code can't be put into one sentence, or even one paragraph. If I had asked any of the three teachers of the code to put it into words they'd have thought I was either looking for trouble or making fun of them. Same thing, really.

"What do you mean, what's right?" I can hear Mama saying. "Right is right. Everybody knows when they're doing something wrong."

FOR an age that has lost its bearings, HARRY GERSH offers here a brief digest of the precepts he learned from Mama, Tante, and Mom, three expounders of the moral law, with special reference to the Eighth Commandment: "Thou shalt not steal." Mr. Gersh has been one of the most frequent contributors to "From the American Scene," having presented informal sociological studies of the myth of "mama's cooking" (October 1947), of the Jewish "paintner" (January 1948), the "kochalein" (February 1949), and various other key aspects of Jewish personality, mores, and cultural patterns in this country. Mr. Gersh is assistant educational director of the Textile Workers' Union of America (CIO). In recent months he has contributed several scripts to NBC radio programs, including "The Eternal Light."

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But of course everybody doesn't know when they're doing something wrong. For instance: if I'm trying to sell something to Macy's I can send the buyer a box of candy, a bottle of champagne, two tickets to *Guys and Dolls*. But how about two tickets to Miami? And what if the buyer isn't Macy's but the Army Quartermaster Corps? Very involved. But not to Mama, Tante, Mom. Let's give some illustrations—and maybe some public-spirited philosopher-jurist will extrapolate a usable system of do's and don'ts from them.

FIRST, and absolutely, there was no stealing. Not even the honest kind. This may sound like the West Point code, but it isn't. It depends on your definition of stealing. And it's not a question of semantics, either. It depends on what really belongs to whom.

When I was very young pennies were still a medium of exchange. When the kids were good, and when there were pennies to spare, Mama or Papa would deal out a penny each to the children. And a penny was worth being good for. It bought things—not bubble gum, either. And sometimes the remembered taste of a charred, hard marshmallow banana or seven-for-a-penny caramels was too much for us. Sometimes we couldn't wait for Papa to declare a surplus or for Mama to remember that she hadn't had to swipe at us with a dish towel for more than twenty-four hours. Then we were tempted to break the code.

In those days household shopping wasn't a weekly chore pieced out with mid-week phone calls to the butcher and grocer. Iceboxes were too inefficient, canned goods too suspect, and money too scarce to buy a week's supply of anything. Shopping was the daily recreation of the housewife. Sometimes Mama was too busy, too ill, or just forgetful, and one of the children would have to shop, usually for a single item.

The price of milk, sugar, a can of tomato herring, was fixed. It didn't change from day to day. But the prices of fresh fruits and vegetables were variable; that was the temptation. Though of course it usually wasn't as simple as that. Food was determined, not by a count of mouths to feed, but by a count of the money on hand. When we went shopping it was usually for "ten cents potatoes," or "two cents soupen greens." But suppose we needed exactly four bananas or a bunch of radishes . . .? How was Mama to know whether an eggplant cost eight or nine cents on Tuesday? Temptation—just like a trip to Florida in a private plane.

I don't know how Mama or Tante or Mom found out, but they always knew when we offered a penny too little in change. It was as if disaster had struck the family. First, Mama would get angry. Then she'd cry. Then I would cry, in pain, in entreaty, in supplication. Finally in shame. It ended with Mama, me, and my sister—she had nothing to do with all this but she had a sympathetic nature—crying together. Mama explained that it wasn't the penny, if I really needed it she would give it to me, but stealing was the road to damnation. Not a theological damnation, but the hell of being an *ausvarf* and *lehdiggeher*—a good-for-nothing bum. And finally, her trump card: she ended with a promise not to tell Papa if I wouldn't do it again. Somehow the myth persisted that Papa represented the final judge and judgment, the Supreme Court and the executioner. Mama—this myth she maintained, too, in face of all the plain facts—was only the arresting officer and lower-level magistrate.

Occasionally one of us would go to the store for a neighbor. Temptation was greater then but no one ever fell. Mama would surely have told Papa about that.

In these issues, right and wrong were as black and white. No difficulty knowing one from the other. Mama established the law and we were well aware of it, and we knew that Mama knew we were well aware of it. If we broke the law it was on a calculated risk. But we knew we were doing wrong.

Real moral conflict came when a storekeeper made a mistake. We knew at once when we had too much change because every order to go to the store ended with, "and bring back the right change." We checked the coins as they were being placed in our hands. (The merchant might have caught the mistake if he had placed the change on the counter, but if he did that some of the coins always rolled under the herring barrel.) Most good actors and actresses come out of working-class areas. Part of the reason, besides the fact that the poor are so deserving, is the training we got when a storekeeper gave us too much change. We would stand innocently, smiling beatifically, then walk slowly out of the store while our hearts

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jumped with fear. A nickel. Why, for six cents more you could go to the movies.

We knew better than to hide the windfall from Mama. She was taken in by the worst actresses on Second Avenue. But she could see right into our hearts. So we were open about it. We announced proudly that the greenstoreman had made a mistake and wasn't the nickel ours by right of . . . well, by rights.

Mama insisted on a detailed, exhaustive explanation of how the mistake happened. Somehow it never happened to her. Then she would pronounce judgment—"Take it back." We argued, we fought, we demanded our constitutional rights. But we lost. On the way back to the store we were alternately angry and proud. Angry at the sheer waste of the gesture. The merchant wouldn't miss the nickel and if he did he couldn't tell who got it. Then we were proud. Anyone could be a hero and stick his finger in a dyke. That's public. We had a quiet heroism, unknown, unsung. We would walk through snow, over mountains, through deserts, to return a nickel because it wasn't rightfully ours. We were poor, but honest.

Once I held out against Mama. I had two good reasons: first, the money was enough to make an issue of, a dime; second, the mistake was made in the A & P. So Mama appealed to higher authority. Papa heard the story without a word: Mama's passionate recital, my eloquent (till I burst into tears) appeal. Then he gave his decision. The A & P manager looked at me quizzically when I came in with the dime. He must have seen the signs that I had been crying, because he gave me a bag of broken cookies. They weren't worth a dime.

So today I'm a man who always rectifies mistakes before leaving the cash register. It's no problem.

UNLIKE those fellows in Washington, I don't have a problem about gifts, either, of any size; I don't now and I didn't then, not *now* because I learned *then*.

If anyone thought of giving us a Smithfield ham . . . let's say a corned beef . . . the weight wouldn't have mattered. We accepted gifts with pleasure and without guilt.

The lichee nuts we got from the Chinese laundry were a kind of graft, but we took them. The free cookies or stale buns given by the bakery after a competitor opened up across the street were obviously designed to influence judgment. We took them, too.

The souvenirs that came with every Grand Opening had strings attached but we not only took them, we sought them out. We went to the new bakery and bought three rolls, to the new grocery and bought a pound of sugar, to the new greenstore for three bananas, knowing well that we'd never come back. But we'd insist on having *our* souvenir. This wasn't even a useful kind of graft. The souvenirs invariably were ruby glass *objets d'art*. Every time we moved we'd throw out a basketful.

We had one rich relative in our family. Real rich. He started as dry goods, became a department store, ended up a *real estatenik*. Before birthdays and holidays we'd let him know what gifts were needed. Of course, the gifts had to be useful objects he could get wholesale. But there was no shame in this and the *real estatenik* never got the idea that he could win a chess game or a political argument from Papa because of the gifts. He knew his place.

On Tuesday night Papa might get up in the union meeting and denounce the boss as an oppressor, a bloodsucker. On Wednesday, if the boss was marrying off one of his daughters or celebrating a holiday, he would break out a bottle of *schnapps* for the favored workers. Papa always took his share. Or when a paint salesman came around to the job and fed Papa on the wonders of a particular brand of paint and on cigars, Papa took the cigars and nodded.

Neither Papa nor Mama nor the boss nor the union members nor the salesman ever doubted Papa's motives in taking the gifts. The boss knew he wasn't buying Papa with a bottle of *schnapps* and the union members were sure of it. There was no moral question involved . . . maybe because Papa was an honest man: he knew it, everybody knew it.

Maybe I should note that we children were seldom told in advance what was the right thing and what was wrong. We sensed it, or we learned after the act—especially in those areas where good morals somehow seemed to boil down to good taste. But how did one get good taste? For example:

Our Passover observance was, on any principled basis, illogical, contradictory, and spotty; in sum, confusing. Only we were

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never confused. We had the MTM code. We knew what to do. We didn't eat bread, but we didn't have a set of special Pesach dishes. We had what we called a Seder, but without bitter herbs and a place for Elijah. Candy and ice cream were forbidden, not on religious grounds, but to avoid giving offense to our more *Pesachdik* neighbors.

One year Sis and I dug up three cents apiece and bought ice cream cones at a *goyishe* store. Some neighbors saw us wolfing the cones in the park and reported to Papa. Papa was sad when he punished us. "Remember, what's right for you is not always right for the people next door. You can live without ice cream. They think they can't live *with* ice cream this week. On this, what they think is more important."

So far even the West Pointers couldn't argue with the MTM code. Maybe about the gifts, but that's all. They say no cheating and no stealing. We say no cheating and no stealing—but you have to understand about the Interests.

Food, shelter, heat, light, clothing, are the necessities. Food is variable both in amount and in price. You can piece it out. You can shop for a lower price. Shelter comes from the landlord, a human being of sorts. He can be bluffed, cozened, threatened. Clothing you can do without, at least for a while. But light and heat for cooking come from the corporations, from the Interests.

The Interests are inhuman entities that know nothing of slack seasons, strikes, illness. If you don't pay they send a man around to stop the light and heat. But the man isn't the corporation. He's a worker like yourself. Shove him down the steps and they send another man. Give him a lesson and they send a third man—with a cop. You can't reach the Interests themselves. So what's wrong with cutting corners on them? Wrong? It's a *mitzvah*, a good deed. They stole what they have anyway.

The only trouble is—how do you make away with a bushel of electricity, how do you chisel on the gas company? The difficulty only made the successes sweeter.

One woman, a *landsfrau* of ours, developed a knack for hitting the gas meter with a flatiron. About once in ten hits she saved a quarter. When her gas meter was about to give its last gasp her boarder would announce to the neighbors, "Mrs. Leffnick is going to hit the gas meter." The house would gather to watch and pray. They crowded the kitchen and halls and held their breaths while Mrs. Leffnick balanced the iron, mumbled something, and let fall. She allowed herself only one hit. If it worked, there was holiday in the house. If it didn't, she put in a quarter. Hope remained unextinguished; the meter remained to be hit on another, perhaps luckier, day.

In spite of Mrs. Leffnick's limit of one hit at a time, the coin box got flatter and flatter. The gas man noticed it one day and a supervisor came around. He didn't say anything but they changed the meter within twenty-four hours. The new meter couldn't be coaxed. Anyway, they put it near the ceiling.

One of Papa's cousins was a regular genius. A garment worker, he spent two weeks gouging a hole in a quarter with a nail. When the hole was made, he threaded a thin wire through it. The family hung over him as he finished his invention. But we had to wait another hour for Papa who was working overtime. It couldn't possibly be done before Papa came because Papa was a scientist; he had read Newton's *Principia* while in jail in Siberia.

When everyone was there the inventor stepped forward and slipped his tethered quarter into the gas meter slot. Millimeter by millimeter he eased it down. It stuck at one point and he jiggled the wire. The meter gave its ratchety noise and the indicator jumped a quarter's worth. The Interests heard the cheering way down in Wall Street.

Immediately everyone in the house began working on a quarter. But the rejoicing was short-lived. The very next night the inventor was proudly demonstrating his invention when he didn't even need any more gas. He was careless and dropped the quarter too fast. It fell into the coin box and the wire broke. The gas company found the quarter with the hole in it and the bit of wire sticking up. They didn't do anything to anyone, maybe because they couldn't pin the quarter on any individual. But they sent a man around to paste notices on all the meters. The little signs said that you could be fined $500 and sent to jail for a year for defrauding the gas company. At those prices, it didn't pay.

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Shortly after that they took out the quarter meters. The causes of progress are varied.

Now Mrs. Leffnick, the flatiron lady, was a saintly woman, the wife and supporter of the *melamed,* the local philosopher. Schmiel, the inventor, once went back downtown on a Saturday to return seventy cents to his boss when the boss didn't even know about the overpayment. Yet, let's face it, both these people tried to cheat the gas company. They performed their robberies in full view of large audiences, and nobody accused them of immorality.

BEATING the electric trust was regarded as a lost cause. Electricity was a mystery and a dangerous one. There were no quarter meters to experiment with. Some of our finest brains worked over the problem but they didn't come up with anything.

Until Tante got interested. The depression had released a lot of engineering brains from productive work, and Tante worried about the waste. So she rounded up a bunch of smart CCNY engineers and presented the problem: "People are out of work, starving, but they're in the clutches of the electric trust. How do you beat the electric meter?"

Those boys were good, and they came up with the answer in record time. A length of shielded wire, with hooks on the ends. They made secret cuts into the wires leading into and out of the meter and attached their bypass into the openings. The current flowed around the meter.

The weakness of this gadget was that it could be immediately seen by the meter reader. So the house had to be alerted to give the alarm. Kids were trained to spot him on the street. Neighbors listened for his tread. It worked, for a while. Then, alas, one meter reader came around in sneakers and found the bypass. He was an "Amerikaner," with no Mama-Tante-Mom to teach him the Law. But in spite of this disadvantage, it turned out that he didn't feel for the Interests, either. His moral code allowed him to warn Tante to disconnect the gadget and not do it again. Tante took his advice, not out of fear, but because the meter reader said he'd be fired if the company found out.

THE gas and electric companies were only part-time enemies. You had direct dealings with them only once a month. But the transit company, one of the very worst of the Interests, that was a daily adversary. If you could gyp the transit company you saved a nickel you had right there in your hand to spend. That was truly found money.

Mom was an expert on the trolley company. She didn't like them at all. Not only did she herself ride free most of the time, but she gave advice to others on how to beat the company. There were three methods: transfers, children, and *chutzpah*—just plain nerve.

The first rule about transfers was never to board a trolley except at a transfer point. At a cross street you could generally find transfer slips. The best transfer to find was a perfectly valid one. They were carefully deposited at transfer points by Mom or one of her co-workers. This was the proper procedure, technologically efficient, morally certified. Mom never got on a car without asking for a transfer. If she got on with a transfer she'd come back to the conductor before she disembarked and ask for another transfer. On alighting she asked the waiting travelers whether anyone needed a transfer. If there were no takers she would place her transfer against the wall, out of the weather, for someone to find. When someone used one of Mom's transfers it was far more than a nickel saved, far more than a nickel less in the swollen coffers of the Interests. It was a blow struck for freedom.

If a valid transfer couldn't be found, the next best thing was a recent one with the little tag of paper still hanging from the time punch. If you were careful you could smooth the tag back and have an unpunched transfer. It wasn't your fault—indeed it was an added accusation against the company—if the conductor was too overworked to punch his transfers properly.

Least satisfactory, but still workable, was a borderline transfer, punched for four o'clock if it was five when you were getting on the car. The conductor might be too busy to notice it. If he did bring up the matter you became indignant. If he was stubborn, you paid. What did you lose?

The psychic traumas of childhood hadn't been invented yet when Mom was fighting the transit corporation, which gave her far more leeway than is possible in these grimmer times. We could ride free up to five years old. But when is a child five years old?

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Chronologically yes, but developmentally, who knows?—it's a philosophical question, really, even the doctors disagree. In Philadelphia the trolley company finally gave up arguing about five-year-olds with bass voices or lipstick. They fastened a metal marker thirty-five inches from the floor. Under thirty-five inches, you rode free. Over thirty-five inches, one token, please. It was easier in winter when an overcoat covered your bent knees.

Each time you got by the conductor you knew you had accomplished something. You could sense it in the quiet smiles of your elders. Another nail in the coffin of the Interests.

Only dedicated enemies of the Interests used the *chutzpah* method of beating the trolley company. It took . . . well, *chutzpah*. You got on a trolley with a crowd, wormed your way into the middle, and assumed the pose of a tired traveler who had got on at 242nd Street. If the conductor looked at you, you looked right back, blankly, as if the trip was taking forever. Again, at worst, you had to pay your nickel.

Thus far the line was straight. No stealing, no cheating, no taking advantage of mistakes—but it was all right to do in the Interests if you could. Not only was it all right, it was an act of justice. The five-and-ten-cent store was a borderline case, but only in the children's minds.

In this golden land of opportunity, the five-and-dime was open range for all children regardless of background, racial grouping, or moral tradition. Saturday morning before eleven o'clock (the movies opened at twelve and we had to get in line an hour early), all the kids visited the five-and-ten. Someone always came out with a toy filched off the counter or a useless bit of housewares. I was never the someone. I was too scared of Mama and the manager.

If the moral line had been straight, it wouldn't have been that way. The five-and-ten was Woolworth's. We didn't know and couldn't imagine any other entrepreneur in this business. And Mr. Woolworth was surely of the Interests. He owned the biggest building in the world. Even Morgan and Rockefeller couldn't say that for themselves.

I still don't have it straight. (How will I explain it to my son? But then his mother will know—but will she?) The electric company, the gas company, the trolley company. But not Woolworth's. It may have been the difference between stealing something tangible and something intangible. It may have been a question of what was necessary and what was merely desirable. I don't know. But I knew then, and still do now, that MTM did not permit stealing from the five-and-ten.

The same rule held for department stores—double. There was never any thought of lifting anything from them. For that you had to be a crook. But sometimes a clerk or a packer made a mistake. The first few times, in my innocence, I rejoiced: we'd given it in the neck to the millionaires again. But MTM said no. If you got too much change in a department store, or if you got two pairs of socks instead of one, there had to be instant, and secret, restitution. True, the department stores belonged to the Interests. But everyone knew that the owners constantly checked every item of stock and every penny in every cash register. If figures didn't tally, the clerk had to make up the difference out of her miserable wages. So while it might be fun taking back a little of your own from the department store Interests, you couldn't do it. The clerks were comrades.

Mama had one borderline area. I never took this up with Tante or Mom because I was pretty sure they would have an immediate answer and I didn't want to hear it. It was on the question of movies. Not about getting in for children's prices—I tried that until I started going with girls. But sneaking in—that was a problem.

We went to the movies every Saturday afternoon. Even during slack season when Papa wasn't working Mama somehow found the eleven cents per child. (But not during strikes. No movies or anything else during strikes.) It was the occasional mid-week visit to the movies that raised the problem.

All boys under eighteen sneaked into the movies. It wasn't hard. We waited in the alley where the fire doors opened. Eventually some boy would leave the theater, and it was a rule that when you left you did so through the fire exits as near the screen as possible. Before the fire door closed two or three kids, ducking low, would be inside the movies and buried in the seats. That's why it had to be up front. There might not be empty seats

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toward the rear and we'd have been spied immediately.

Mama knew when we had been to the movies. The time, the eyes, the glazed look. And she'd want to know where we got the money. After she found out about sneaking in she gave us a lecture. Don't do it. If you do it again I'll tell Papa. But she never did tell Papa. So it must have been a not very severe transgression.

Insurance companies were definitely of the Interests, but what could you do? The agent came around every Friday and collected the quarter. If you didn't give it to him, and on time, too, they canceled your insurance. The only way to beat the insurance company was to die young. That didn't pay already.

We had no other insurance, only the endowment that was to pay for a child's college education. Fire insurance was for people of property. We heard sometimes of a merchant who deliberately set a fire to cheat the insurance company. We knew that was a terrible breaking of the code. Arson was a crime comparable to murder or scabbing.

THUS little by little the children learned from these incidents. We obeyed policemen, except during strikes. We never cheated in school regardless of the penalty for failure or low marks. Later, we voted even when the election seemed of little consequence. We neither touched nor envied the property of others. We didn't lie. But if we said we had taken only one piece of candy from the company box when we'd actually taken two, it was understood. And when Mama or Papa held you at arm's length and was serious and looked you in the eyes and asked, *"Es iz der emmes?"* we answered with the absolute truth and we were secure in knowing that no harm comes from the truth.

The purists argue that if you teach a child to cheat the transit company or steal from the gas company he will grow up to cheat and lie in more important things. It isn't so. Nor is the reverse true. The judges who sentenced Sacco and Vanzetti were brought up under a more rigid moral code than we were. So, probably, were the Internal Revenue agents and police inspectors and businessmen willing to split the take.

It doesn't seem so important today to gyp the Interests. Most people do their little bits of cheating on the auto insurance companies and a dollar here and there on expense items and deductions on the annual income tax blanks. In the good old days when Mama and Tante and Mom were teaching us the code, we never earned enough to pay direct taxes so there is no direct evidence on how they would have looked upon bilking Uncle Sam or—eventuality almost unimaginable—malfeasance in office or in any institutional or public post of duty. But I don't think there can be any question about what their moral verdict in any such cases would have been, had they arisen—it would have been explosive, totally uncompromising, and adamant.

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

THE HALLOWING OF THE NAME

God Depends on Man, as Man on God

HUGO BERGMANN

IN HEBREW the term for martyrdom is *kiddush ha-Shem,* which means literally "sanctification of the Name," as mystical experience is referred to as "the unification of the Name." On the surface, this seems like a mere periphrasis, a flight of pious rhetoric. But, as HUGO BERGMANN points out in this essay, the notion that human activity has a real effect on the Name (i.e., God) is at the very root of Jewish religiosity, and is perhaps specific to it.

Mr. Bergmann, professor of philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, has had a long and distinguished career. He was born in Prague in 1883, and was one of the leaders in the development of cultural Zionism. The present essay, condensed from the original, is taken from a symposium, *Vom Judentum,* published in Prague in 1913; practically all Jewish thinkers in Western Europe contributed to this volume, which marked the emergence of the modern "Jewish renascence." The translation from the German is by Felix Giovanelli.—ED.

IN THE twenty-second chapter of the book of Leviticus there appears a passage which was destined to form the point of departure for one of the most characteristic religious concepts of the Jewish people. It runs: "Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I am the LORD. Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the LORD which hallow you."

What is singular about this verse is the Hebrew word *v'nikdashti,* "but I will be hallowed." God the hallower, who, in his own words, confers holiness, is to be hallowed in turn by the children of Israel. It would be tempting to regard this verse as a mere metaphorical flight, but there is much more here than meets the eye.

First, let us fully comprehend the meaning of the word *kadosh* ("holy," "to hallow"). As it is used in the Bible, it reveals an intimate connection between the claims of holiness and those of moral action, with holiness being a special aspect of God's moral action—*he* hallows. Man, in contrast to God, confronts the moral imperative as an alien, coercive power. It is related in Jewish tradition that when God revealed himself to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, "he inverted the mountain over them as one would a cask"; at first, then, the moral law is a compulsion inflicted upon us. Though we can obey the moral law only in a state of freedom, though it is impossible to compel moral action—compulsion would make it unmoral or morally indifferent—the fact remains that man, insofar as he is a creature, can only obey the claims of moral right at the expense of a conflict with his senses.

God emerges in Jewish thought as the creator of the moral law, not as if he were a capricious despot who, as a captious sophistry has so cleverly puzzled it out, put the stamp of right on whatever he chooses to call right, but because truth and moral right are his essence, are inseparable from him. He is the hallower, for he fulfills the moral act without conflict or contradiction.

But it is at this point that the concept of God's being hallowed appears very difficult to grasp. For if God is in himself holy, what meaning can be assigned to the injunction that he is to be hallowed by his creatures? To understand this, one must plunge deeper into the conception of God that characterizes Jewish religious thought. It is obviously a

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conception completely alien to the mental world of our present culture. In the present view of the West, God and the world are seen as something given once for all, the world and the creatures in it as separate and apart from God. The Jewish conception also separates God and the world, but yet binds the destiny of God and world so intimately that not only is the world dependent on God but—and this is of central importance—*God's destiny hangs upon the world's outcome.*

WE COULD perhaps best distinguish the Jewish from the prevailing outlook by saying that in the European view, the relation of God to the world is static, in the Jewish, dynamic. According to the former, God *is*, he *is* one, he *is* holy. The Jewish approach is to contemplate God from the point of view of his creatures, to see him as the end and task of creaturely life. Whether there is anything or not, philologically speaking, in Lagarde's rendering of the Hebrew words *El* ("God") and *Elohim* ("God") as "end," it nevertheless answers very closely to the intent of the Jewish conception of God. God is, to his creatures, a task to be fulfilled, an end to be realized.

Even that quality of God which bears the greatest significance for the Jews, his oneness, his unity, is apprehended dynamically. Reference is made less to God's unity than to union with God: *yichud ha-Shem*—"unification of the Name." The unity of God depends—as the Zohar teaches—on man's prayer. In the Zohar we find a minute—and in its fantastic way, sustained—description of the manner in which the penetration of its hero's prayer into heaven brings about this union. At the end of the Day of Atonement there is the seven-times-repeated phrase: "YHVH is Elohim!" In our day this phrase is a mere formula. But to the Jew it was traditionally the expression of the holiest of secrets. The inner exaltation in which the Day of Atonement was lived brought it to pass that YHVH and Elohim should be united: that is, the creation whose principle is Elohim had again found its way back to its source, YHVH, the divine governor and preserver of the world. In inner prayer the Jew had reconciled God's manifoldness with his unity and could now say: the many is one, the world is divine, YHVH is Elohim! The sevenfold repetition of this cry at the conclusion of the Day of Atonement corresponded in some measure to what had been *achieved* through prayer, fasting, and self-mortification throughout that day.

THUS God, as seen from the point of view of his creatures, is essentially a task, and his destiny depends to that extent upon them. In Chapter 30 of the Midrash *Vayyikra rabbah* [commentary on Leviticus], we read: "And if ye so do, God may speak; and when ye have covenanted, in that selfsame hour do I rise, am I elevated." In another part of the Midrash, a significant passage points to the reason why God has elected to dwell in Israel: "Has a sale ever been laid before you whereunder the person of the seller should be included in the transaction? Certainly not! But I, I have deeded my teachings to you and *myself am part of the bargain.*" This not only means that he who truly lives in the meaning of the Law can rule and dispose in God's stead—"The righteous man decides and the Holy One, may he be blessed, fulfills"—but means further: "God's destiny reposes in the hand of the righteous." Other pertinent passages may be cited. In Psalm 68, we find: "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." This passage is interpreted by tradition: "The strength of the righteous is added unto that of the power above." In Paragraph 69 of the Midrash *Bereshit rabbah* [commentary on Genesis], this occurs: "The bad subsist through their God; but as for the righteous, God subsists through them, for it has been said: Behold, the Lord resteth on him."

The Cabala explains the impact of the righteous man on the world above to mean that he cannot exert an influence on it in its relationship to itself but rather in its relationship to the world below. By the created being's moral action, the uninterrupted efflux of grace from the infinite and boundless source, the *En Sof* (Infinite) is so multiplied via the *Sefirot* (the hierarchy of spiritual realms emanating from the *En Sof*) as to overflow, spill over—with the consequence that all the worlds of the universe sense the presence of a benign influence.

In other passages of the Zohar the theory that divine unity—and the persistence of the world assured by it—depends on the act of

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union of God's creation with God is set down in stark simplicity without attempts at further explanation. Even in the introductory words of the Zohar one finds at the very outset: "Just as in the divine name, *Elohim*, the two words *eleh* ["these"] and *mi* ["who"] come together, and together form the name of God the creator, so does the world subsist only through the union of the revealed, the manifest [the "these"!] with the unrevealed 'who,' the subject of the world. And by this secret doth the world subsist."

Thus, created beings uphold the world as much as does God. God created the world, but his creatures maintain it insofar as they recognize it as divine; they maintain, they preserve it insofar as they unite themselves to the divine, as they bring it down below. Whoever fulfills a moral act becomes a partner of God the hallower in the handiwork of the first beginning.

And just as man renews the divine work of creation by his moral action, so does he, on the other hand, bring about God's abasement by his sinning. By his acts, not only is a fissure (*pegimah*) opened in the sinner's soul, but the divine glory is diminished and sinks down to "lower levels." In the Zohar it is related of God that he addressed the first of his creatures, after his sin, in this wise: "Woe unto thee, thou hast weakened the power above and darkened the light above." In another passage the expulsion of man from paradise is interpreted beautifully and movingly to mean that by man's sin God has been driven out of paradise.

ONE could multiply indefinitely the number of references from Hebraic writings that emphasize in this manner the dependence of divine destiny on man's doing. Those cited above—quite unmethodically—may suffice to give some idea of the concept. It is a more difficult task, however, really to think this concept through, especially to harmonize it with another certitude by which Jewish thought is completely permeated: the complete conviction of God's being. For, if God is, how can he be dependent on us, how can his being be interwoven with our doing? In what manner does a creature reciprocally influence its creator? How can we created beings hallow God?

For there can be no mistake about it: to dissolve the idea of God into that of a goal, to think of God merely as a *telos* to be realized—that would be to miss the Jewish conception of God completely. That God is, independently of whether or not I realize him within myself, is not a subject for doubt to the Jew. But—and this is the decisive turn of thought which the Jew completes—God exists only for himself, he is not something existing in himself that one can grasp from without, that can be possessed in the sense that a thing is grasped. Thus, he exists only for those who are in communion with him, who are in union with him. Hence, the Jew asks: in what way *is* God for me? And he answers: insofar as he becomes my *act* in my life. Insofar as I have validated him, has he become a reality in my world. In the *Pesikta* of Rab Kahana we read: "Ye are my witnesses, the Eternal speaks and I am God: Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai said: 'If ye give witness unto me, then am I the Eternal. If ye be not my witnesses, then am I not the Eternal, as it were.' "

Those words with which God manifested himself out of the burning bush to Moses, as the "I am that I am," may be taken as a fair approximation of the meaning; but the word "am" is in Hebrew in the imperfect tense, in the tense of uncompleted being, and can therefore be translated with equal justice as "I shall be." As an *I* in being but at the same time unfulfilled and yet to be realized, God manifests himself.

The Jew does not base his religious thought on the antithesis of creator and creature, but on that of *thing* and *I*. Man, so we read in a Hasidic text, may be likened to a ladder. His feet are planted on the ground and his head towers skyward, and the angels of God climb up and down, over and through him. For divine glory sinks down if he sink, and when he scales the height it goes up with him. Man's role as God's elect, as one fashioned in the image of God, is that he should be a guide on the way of the world's fulfillment, that, in the words of the Zohar, God may utilize him as the vehicle in which he, God, makes his way upward.

This double nature of the Divine is what, in my opinion, Hebrew thought has given expression to by the duality of God and *Shem* ("Name," used as a synonym for God). *Shem* refers to the unpronounceable tetra-

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grammaton, the God-name YHVH, but is also to be distinguished from it. *Shem* is how one designates God in words, what one can say about him. When the potentiality of the divine is realized by his creatures, when the created being has achieved the sacred union (the *yichud ha-Shem*) within himself, only then can he say to God: YHVH. In this connection, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai observed that only after the completion of the creation does the complete name YHVH Elohim occur in the story of Genesis, that only with the restoration of the oneness of the world will it have become possible to address God by his very name.

It is therefore understandable that the High Priest was wont to utter the name of God only once a year, in the highest moment of religious rapture. On all other days, when the moment of communion was not completely attained, the God-name *Adonai* ("Lord") was used in the service. If one *spoke* of God in everyday life, one said *ha-Shem*. Thus, *ha-Shem* is God as an object of speech, it is what we can grasp of him without being in communion with him.

IN HIS *Essence of Christianity*, Harnack points to the infinite worth of the human soul as one of the most characteristic doctrines of Christianity. This doctrine is Jewish through and through. (I say this not out of a puerile desire to make claims to priority but rather because it is important that the contemporary Jew should become aware that the doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth is, if truly considered in its "essence," Jewish, and that Jesus could say with right that he had come to fulfill the Law. Not, certainly, as Western thought has misunderstood it, to fulfill it *for us*. The task that he wished to carry out is one that subsists from generation to generation.) The soul of a man is infinitely precious to the Jews, for it is there that the great miracle of union with God is to be consummated, the bud whence God can and shall bloom, as it were. Hence, Rabbi Nehemiah could say: "One individual man is equal in worth to the whole creation." The Talmud has it: "Each man is duty-bound to regard himself as though the world had been created expressly for him."

In the account of the creation of the world given in the first chapter of Genesis, the otherwise recurrent "And God saw that it was good" is notably missing at the end of the second day of creation. As if to make up for it, the narrator says at the end of the sixth day: "And God saw everything he had made, and, behold, it was *very* good." This singular construction has considerably exercised the Jewish imagination ever since. Out of the multiplicity of interpretations, one may be singled out for our purpose. On the second day, God created the firmament which was to divide the waters (above) from the waters (below). For the first time, duality had been introduced into the world. This is the reason that God chose not to call his work good. But on the sixth day, with the creation of man, of him who was destined to be the fulfiller of sacred union, all duality was completely overcome. Hence, God could now bless not only the work of that day but also, viewing retrospectively the work of the second day, add the blessing: "And behold, it was very good." The Midrash interprets "very" to refer to the *impulse to do evil*. Because man can also be evil, because he is free to withstand temptation, he is the center of the creation.

In the Jewish view man is at one and the same time creator and creature. A creature only so long as he is like a thing impelled from without, who is conditioned in his acts. A creator when, loosening himself from the bonds of necessity, he rises freely to the moral act. As a moral being, man is his own self-creator; this we are expressly taught by the Talmud. Man's task, in the words of the Zohar, is to transform himself from a cistern—a receptacle for alien waters—into a spring that gushes forth its own element. We are now enabled to understand the ever recurrent admonition of the Zohar, namely, that God himself bids man to become like him in all things. Similarly, we can now also understand what the Pentateuch had already had God say: Ye will be holy, for I, your God, am holy. As seen from the Jewish point of view, the command is quite natural; for God is the *end* of human striving. With each act whereby within ourselves we fashion an *I* from a thing, whereby we create a free being from a conditioned creature, with every morally responsible act, we become God-like in our doing, we fulfill the divine.

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ON THE HORIZON

THE MOVIE CAMERA AND THE AMERICAN

Arthur Miller, Samuel Goldwyn, and the Material World

ROBERT WARSHOW

I AM not one of those who responded strongly to *Death of a Salesman* when it was presented on the stage. Like many "great" American plays, it seems to me gross and ungainly, almost monstrous in its want of finesse, full of a self-conscious energy masquerading as profundity and a mechanical realism which hides a fundamental reluctance to give the real world its due. Lee J. Cobb's performance in the leading role was undoubtedly masterful, but in a sense it agreed too well with the fixed intent of the play: one felt at times that the agonies of the elephantine figure on the stage came not so much from the ruin of his own life as from the merciless constrictions of the playwright's vision, especially perhaps from that insanely "artistic" stagecraft which required him, like a great rat in an invisible maze, to play at walking through imaginary doors and around imaginary walls—no wonder that at last he pounded the floor in his frustration.

And if Willy Loman is a grotesque, his sons, with their pat "American" nicknames and their stilted confusions, are the merest cardboard: Andy Hardy broken on the wheel of social criticism. Only the mother, Willy's wife, and the next-door neighbor Charley have any honest reality; on the whole, though not consistently, Arthur Miller does let these two speak for themselves. But their reality continually denies the reality of the play: Charley's final summation of Willy's tragedy (". . . for a salesman there is no rock bottom to the life") is his moment of greatest falsity, for he is no less a "salesman" than Willy, but a successful one; on the other hand, Mrs. Loman's failure at the end to understand what has happened expresses her essential solidity: it has not occurred to her that she was married to a symbol. (It is curious that the mother-figure, which is the focus of so much falsehood in American culture, seems also occasionally to represent its firmest grasp on the real.)

Taken point by point, the movie *Death of a Salesman* is inferior to the play. Fredric March, a more commonplace actor than Cobb, is also less imposing as a physical presence. Cobb's very bulk did much to disguise the pettiness of Willy Loman's failure; March's Willy, actually more believable than Cobb's, is to that extent more pathetic and more ridiculous, a crazy man talking to himself. The film suffers also from that exaggerated respect which Hollywood sometimes offers to a recognized work of art; where most films made from Broadway plays are automatically better than their originals merely by reduction of the amount of undistinguished dialogue, this one manages to include almost as much as the play. Another difficulty is in the constant presentations of Willy's memories and hallucinations, which were awkward enough on the stage but at least belonged to an accepted framework of theatrical convention; the film manages the

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transitions from the real to the hallucinatory more smoothly, but these sequences still wrench it out of shape: the very fluidity of the medium favors simpler and more direct exposition (even the accepted use of the "flashback"—Willy's hallucinations do not quite belong to that convention—is almost never accomplished without a kind of purely technical sentimentality).

Nor have the makers of the film taken much advantage of the greater mobility of the medium. It is true that Willy's house, which can now have solid walls and real doors, is more present than it was on the stage, though in fact the camera concentrates so obstinately on the figures of the actors that the house is never allowed the importance it ought to have. There is also a good opening sequence photographed from the back seat of Willy's car as he drives slowly over the George Washington Bridge, peering anxiously through the windshield and now and then fidgeting a little to bring himself closer to the steering wheel, just his shoulders and the back of his head, with the two big sample cases sticking up in the foreground, all conveying the impression of an aging and pitiable masculinity, a man who works hard with little success. This sequence represents the film's most intelligent use of March's body, which is best taken for granted (later there is constant overemphasis on bowed shoulders, worried eyes and forehead, middle-aged belly); it is also the closest sight we ever get of Willy Loman as a real salesman—a man who might actually drive into a town in New England and try to sell some specific line of goods. It tells much about the limitations of Mr. Miller's realism that he should have thought it a good idea not to mention just what it is that Willy sells, though in the play we are told the brand-names of his refrigerator and his various cars; the supposition that "universatility" is achieved by suppression of the particular is a characteristic error of American writers.

Once the camera has brought Willy to his home—that is, to the point at which the play begins—it abdicates in favor of the playwright, and we never really get back to the figure in the car. Willy's Brooklyn—and his New England—remain as shadowy and unlocalized as ever; he dwells in an America not even of the imagination, but only of the idea. When one of the scenes of hallucination is placed in the subway, it is only to emphasize more strongly the refusal to fill in the concrete background of Willy's sufferings: everything is kept neat and blank, the other people no more than an orderly group of extras, the posters carefully out of focus in the background, and the camera never leaves Willy. Who would dream that a movie director could refuse the invitation of the subway? But of course it is in the nature of this picture to refuse every such invitation; the subway may be unpleasant, but we use it every day; if the subway or the streets or the real Brooklyn were permitted to exist, then it would be clear that Willy Loman had, if not a good life, at least a style of life, and the point of the film, as of the play, is that he had no life at all, he didn't "put a bolt to a nut or tell you the law or give you medicine," above all he did not work with his hands, which for Mr. Miller seems to represent the true meaning of failure—again, a characteristic American abstraction.

YET the picture has a certain power which for me at least—apparently not for others—was lacking in the play. No film ever quite disappears into abstraction: what the camera reproduces has almost always on the most literal level the appearance of reality; that is one reason why the movies can afford to be so much more banal than the theater: when we complain of their "unreality" we do not mean exactly that they fail to carry conviction, but more probably that they carry conviction all too easily. In the blankest moments of *Death of a Salesman* one sees, if not Willy Loman, who is always more a concept than a human being, at least the actor Fredric March, brought so close and clear that his own material reality begins to assert itself outside the boundaries that are supposed to be set by his role. On the stage, this would be a fault, for it would mean that the actor was seeking to impose himself on the play; here there is no need for him to put himself forward: he need only be present, a passive object merely available to the camera's infinite appetite for the material. This is not to say that the actor's "real" personality replaces that of the character he portrays—though that may happen—but only that the actor as an object of perception is real and important irrespective of whether we believe in the character: the

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screen permits no vacancies, it will be filled one way or another. Thus as we lose interest in the aging salesman of the play, there emerges this other spectacle with its own quality and pathos, indeed its own drama, which is not at all foreign to the play though beyond its presumed limits: the spectacle of the aging movie star attempting to express what he believes is to be found in the play, exposing to inspection the bags under his eyes, the unpleasing sag of his thin mouth, as if to insist at whatever cost that he is engaged in a serious enterprise. There are moments when one becomes aware with almost too much clarity that March feels himself suddenly at the heart of the matter—for instance when he looks with his sick face at Bernard, the boy who stuck to his books and has become a "success," and asks, "Bernard . . . what's the secret?"—and at such moments he compels one's respect, not so much for what the playwright has written (though this line has some brilliance) as for the intensity of his own concern with it.

In the end, the quality of seriousness which is most visible in the presence of March becomes the dominant tone of the whole production—in the deliberate direction, in the solemn lighting, in the very rejection of cinematic opportunities which a "routine" film would take up as a matter of course—and though one need not finally acknowledge any personal involvement with the fate of Willy Loman, it is not so easy to deny an involvement with the film as such: not Willy Loman, but *Death of a Salesman* is the American phenomenon that demands examination. Granted that the drama does not come to life in its own terms, what is the nature of the aura that undeniably surrounds it?

SOME of the more illuminating recent sociological writing—I think especially of David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*—has described the typical American as abnormally concerned with personal attractiveness. We are all familiar with the advertising that plays upon our social anxieties, most often in a sexual context but also in the more general terms of status: if you don't use the right tooth paste or the right soap, if you have not read the right books and learned correct grammar, then you will not get a girl and you will miss that promotion you have been hoping for. These advertisements are only the most practical expression of a broad concept of American society which in fact we all assent to. The American stands outside any fixed social framework, and so he must create his own place, indeed he must create himself, out of the resources of his personality. If he believes still that the world lies open to him, he believes also, and with a greater clarity, that if he fails to measure up to his opportunity he will find himself an outcast. At one time this struggle for status was seen to have a certain logic: if you worked hard you would probably get along respectably, since it was more or less in your own power to find some useful area of activity; the danger of failure, though real enough, belonged to the accepted hazards. But now the individual must in most cases attach himself to some large bureaucracy over which he has no control and where his fate depends primarily on his pleasing his superiors, or if not his superiors, then simply "pleasing" in the most general sense; the roads to success have become vague and infinitely complex, the very content of success is no longer clear, and failure is a kind of insidious disease, like cancer: you may find out at any moment that you have had it all along. And our defenses become correspondingly vague, moving toward fantasy and propitiation; so long as our smiles are returned, we know that we are not yet cast away. In short, the American is a "salesman" with nothing to sell but his own personality. Mr. Miller's Charley sums it up in his speech at Willy Loman's grave: ". . . you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. . . . A salesman is got to dream. . . . It comes with the territory."

No doubt this picture is true. We still teach our children that the world lies open to them and they must make their way—what else should we teach?—and we watch over them continually in fear that they may miss that exact balance of the physical, intellectual, and social graces without which their gifts will go to waste. It is true that we expend our energies in childish fantasies of success and power, and that on some level of our minds we go in expectation of the word of rejection that will leave us jobless, loveless, without a place. As admirers of *Death of a Salesman* have said, we are all Willy Lomans.

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But this identification is taken more seriously than it deserves; on the upper levels of our culture it is assumed that literature is a form of explicit social criticism, and consequently all "negative" social images tend to be given undue weight as representing a "truer" reality, just as on lower cultural levels certain "positive" images—of home, religion, and the like—are still assured of an automatic response. If we look soberly at Willy Loman—this absolute "salesman" with his obsession about being "well liked" and his utter emptiness of values, behaving as if he himself had read *The Lonely Crowd* and been seized with a sociological delusion—it is obvious at once that we are not all Willy Lomans except in the sense that we are all sadists or homosexuals or "schizoids"; psychological and sociological types have their own reality, but only a lunatic runs true to type, perhaps not even a lunatic, and the dramatic uses of lunacy are limited. If Willy Loman were a valid creation, if we could believe thoroughly even in his lunacy, then the distortions of his personality would have to operate within a surrounding reality that might give them dramatic meaning; but the "purity" of the playwright's conception defeats all drama: one cannot quite believe that Willy ever sold anything, and even his death does not seem more a fact than the hallucinations that lead up to it.

Actually, the most illuminating analogy to Willy Loman is to be found not in life but in an earlier literature: he is a man possessed by a "humor." The fact that his particular humor is constructed out of a more advanced social science than that of the 17th century does not essentially alter its character; the more profound a scientific insight, the more it demands a kind of aesthetic appreciation: taken literally, its profundity becomes only a new shallows (we might be spared much boring amateur psychoanalysis if this truth were more widely accepted). The Jacobean comedy of humors was also in the most direct sense related to life—its characters were "recognizable" with the same excessive clarity as Willy Loman—and it had its special validity (which was not, however, the validity of social criticism). But there has never been a successful tragedy of humors: the protagonist of tragedy must walk whole upon the stage.

Death of a Salesman belongs to that culture of ideology which may eventually be all the culture we shall have. It is serious and in the most obvious ways honest, but if we take it as seriously as it asks to be taken, that is only one more evidence of our ability to refuse to recognize our own boredom (for another example, consider the reception of *The Cocktail Party*). As the mass audience escapes into easy sentiment, so the educated audience escapes into ideas, a tendency which does not necessarily reflect a real interest in ideas: *Death of a Salesman* offers us not the fact but the atmosphere of thought.

Nor are these two audiences and their cultures so far apart as might appear. Thus, faced with the need to give his play some kind of dramatic movement, Mr. Miller confusedly allows himself to suggest that Willy Loman's having been unfaithful to his wife may be the only important factor in the collapse of his family—a possibility that threatens continually to make nonsense of the play's main point. And one is only momentarily surprised to learn that Stanley Kramer, the producer of the film, having refused to permit any sentimental alteration of the play's "negative" conclusion, has soothed the feelings of certain salesmen's associations by making a "positive" short film about the advantages of salesmanship as a career; I have not seen this short, but there is no reason why Mr. Kramer should not have brought to it all the honest conviction that can be seen in his handling of the longer film.

In the end, perhaps the most valid reaction to *Death of a Salesman* is the philistine one, which has at least the virtue of judging the play in terms of actuality. Perhaps as much to the point as anything I have written is the comment of that playgoer who is reported to have said as he left the theater, "That New England territory never *was* any good." The fact that this remark seems stupendously naive is testimony to the play's distance from reality.

As I have said, one of the basic appeals of *Death of a Salesman* lies in its pessimism. So much of "official" American culture has been cheaply optimistic that we are likely almost by reflex to take pessimism as a measure of seriousness. Besides, the element of pessimism is often for educated people an aid to identification: Willy Loman gains much of what reality he seems to have

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from the fact that we are all secretly inclined to think ourselves "failures." But a pessimistic falsehood is no less false—and no less an escape—than an optimistic one.

A more "affirmative" picture of American life is offered in Samuel Goldwyn's production *I Want You,* which presents the vicissitudes of two generations of an American family at the time of the outbreak of the Korean war. Those concerned in the production of this movie doubtless believed in what they were doing, but none of the critics, so far as I know, has spoken of it as a significant work of art, and it has joined the endless ranks of "Hollywood" productions. On the whole, it deserves the reception it has got. Yet it is in many ways better and more serious than *Death of a Salesman.*

I Want You is apparently an effort to repeat the success of Mr. Goldwyn's earlier and greatly overrated *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1947), which attempted to give a generalized picture of American life soon after the end of the last war. *The Best Years of Our Lives* was a tissue of cheerful platitudes, using a notable technical virtuosity to present the surface of reality with such hard clarity as to discourage any looking beyond the film's narrow ideological boundaries; social tensions were presented only to be smoothly denied, political and economic problems were evaded (usually, in a characteristic American fashion, by reducing them to the plane of personal morality), and in the episodes concerning the veteran who had lost his hands a particularly dreadful example of personal suffering was used as one more occasion for a vulgar sentimental optimism.* In *I Want You,* too, there is much falsity, but since the film does not pretend to be concerned with any broad social problems, only with the simpler fact of a threat of war, it does not have to make so many evasions. In addition, the external situation discourages any crude optimism: *The Best Years of Our Lives* was about the end of a war, this film is about the beginning of one, and its "affirmation" must be more subtle, residing not so much in the characters' larger actions or their occasional set speeches as in the unspoken assumption that they will prove equal to whatever may be demanded of them. This is an arrogant assumption, but it is presented with a kind of innocence; the chief falsification is in giving the characters a greater dignity than one would expect of them, and the result is something like an American version of those British films which do not so much extol the British character as quietly take its virtues for granted. Beneath their personal anxieties and emotional crudities, which are presented usually with external honesty and now and then with something more, the characters have an astonishing serenity, expressing not the absence of tensions but, more realistically, a confidence that the tensions will remain under control; even the very young characters, despite their deliberate gracelessness (and rather sickening graces), and even the weak and somewhat shiftless father, display at bottom the same self-containment. Actually this quality is far from new in American movies; it is the special quality of the most fully realized Western and soldier heroes, and in many other movies it has been offered, if unsuccessfully, as the essential component of the "American" character. But here for the first time one can sense a possibility of its being absorbed without violence into realistic pictures; it is still an untruth, but the precise area of its falsity seems no longer so easy to define: it may yet become an untruth organically assimilated, which is to say a myth. (It is hard to believe that such a development would be desirable, though it might produce good pictures, as it has done in the Westerns.)

Inseparable from this self-containment of the characters is a pervasive temperate melancholy which adds to the impression of a maturity not truly achieved but yet not easily to be called false. This melancholy has really nothing in common with the gross ideological pessimism of *Death of a Salesman,* but belongs precisely to the "affirmation" of practical people who have accepted the burdens of their lives, however narrowly they may conceive them, and expecting no final victory or full satisfaction, are still unable to believe in the possibility of defeat, if only because a certain stupidity makes them incapable of imagining a threat to their inner selves. Again, it is a quality most clearly realized in film portraits of men of action—Western heroes and soldiers—but it is also one of the interesting elements in

* I discussed this movie at length in a review published in *Partisan Review,* May-June 1947.

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soap opera, sentimental popular fiction, or an occasional "serious" comic strip ("Mary Worth," for instance), and even in the novels of such writers as J. P. Marquand and James Gould Cozzens. And one finds again some difficulty in discerning the precise boundaries between the true and the false. When Dorothy McGuire hangs out her wash in the back yard, a contrived image of the conscientious young wife and mother, and expounds her "mature" view of life, certainly we are in the area of the false; but at other times, when the sharp, "refined" lines of her face and the controlled tension of her voice are allowed to make their effect without emphasis, one begins to believe even in the picture she was trying to create at the clothesline.

In general, what line of demarcation can be found between the true and the false is in the difference between what the actors with too much contrivance are made to represent and what in their mere physical appearance they seem "naturally" to be, a difference that remains even when the purpose of contrivance is only to "interpret" what is already there. The plot is of course ideologically determined: it concerns mainly the decision of a reserve officer (Dana Andrews) to go back into the army, and the initial rebellion and final reconciliation of his young brother (Farley Granger) at being drafted, these events set against a background designed to display the virtues of the American character and a general calm solidarity in the face of danger. The story is presented with unusual tact and in some ways a surprising honesty (it would have been unthinkable for a movie during the last war to show that a young man might regard a postcard from his draft board as a major calamity), and most of the action is in itself quite credible, but one is continually disturbed by the way everything agrees tidily with the initial purposes: honesty itself becomes only a part of the "effect," like the candor of a statesman. The film's real virtue is in the degree to which, despite its ideological commitment, it remains tied to physical appearances, and this not with the rigidity of intent that made *The Best Years of Our Lives* visually so shallow, but professionally, with that less purposive compulsion simply to make the most of visual opportunities which is the film camera's peculiar justification. Thus Dana Andrews' face of a thoughtful frog and his undistinguished competent body, which might easily with misguided artistry be built into an "American" symbol (as has been done with the more extreme lines of James Stewart, for instance), are wisely left to carry conviction in their own way; Andrews is an ideal film actor in the sense that his physical appearance never ceases to be interesting and "real," and almost never fails to carry suggestion, no matter what situation he may be placed in; here, he is completely believable even when he must sit with his little daughter on his lap telling her a bedtime story, and if any note of falsity does creep in, it is immediately redeemed by the clumsy line of his shoulders as he carries her to her crib.

In special contrast to *Death of a Salesman* is this picture's concentration on the material background. In *Death of a Salesman* the background is deliberately suppressed, apparently from a belief that the "essential" quality of American life is only obscured by its material basis—a curious assumption for a movie that might claim to be precisely a materialist interpretation of our society, but, as I have remarked, a necessary one if it is to make its point. The more normal American view, though perhaps a less intellectual one, and certainly the natural view for anyone starting out to take pictures, is that the "essential," if it is to be found at all, will turn out to reside in the material. In *I Want You,* we are shown a good many details of the family business and are given opportunities to see Dana Andrews at work. When young Farley Granger goes for his appearance before the draft board, the waiting room is crowded with other young men, not empty extras as in the subway scene of *Death of a Salesman,* but actors adding their particular touches of fact (not very happily, it is true). And no opportunity is lost to fill in the appearance of the streets, the stores, a bar, the insides of homes.

The homes above all, of course: the dingy home of the older generation, with streaks of dust on the walls after Mildred Dunnock in her big scene has torn down her husband's collection of guns, bayonets, and helmets from the First World War, and the newer home of the younger couple with modern paneling and brighter upholstery, but just

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as cluttered and conventional, a ten-cent-store picture of a ship over the mantel and a big wing chair beside the fireplace; if the business does not do well, this house too will in its turn become dingy and characterless, not from any want of care but chiefly from a want of self-assertiveness: the home is so obviously important that it carries its meaning in its mere existence, like a business office—there is no need to make it a vehicle of self-expression. Presented with an unthinking conviction that makes the symbol something more than a cliché, the homes of this film do actually represent what these Americans are seeking to defend. They ask only to be left in undisturbed possession of their lives and their property: one could almost weep at the innocence which makes them think this a small thing to ask. But that innocence is in its own way a form of worldly wisdom; it belongs to that famous American materialism which, if it limits our understanding of other peoples and of ourselves, also offers some protection against the murderous "spiritualities" of ideology; perhaps one of the American virtues is that our slogans so often ring hollow. In the end, the "representative American" of this movie decides to go back into the army very much as he might decide that the time has finally come when he must fix the lawn-mower, but this "materialist" decision is both wiser and more serious than the kind of "spiritual" impulse that might have sent his father into the army in 1917.

THERE is another illuminating point of comparison between *I Want You* and *Death of a Salesman* in their treatment of relations between the generations. Like Willy Loman, the father of *I Want You* is a liar and boaster, and the moment comes when his lies are exposed: the souvenirs of the First World War which clutter his living room were bought in the pawnshops of New York; he spent the time of the war in Paris as a general's orderly. But when the father on the night before his older son's return to the army feels it necessary to tell him the truth, the son surprisingly refuses this invitation to drama: he knew the truth all along, but "there are some lies that a son doesn't call his father on." Willy Loman is of course a more extreme case, and I would not claim that his sons could have reacted similarly. On the other hand, there is no implication in this film that the father's lies were not important; what is significant is the refusal to go too far below the surface: we are left to feel the importance of the scene without having it interpreted to us. This refusal is a wise one, both in terms of the film medium itself, which is almost always embarrassed by a too conscious concern with profundities, and in terms of the particular characters of this film, whose common-sense relation to reality involves the assumption that their inner psychological conflicts are of no practical relevance so long as they can be kept under control. No doubt this assumption belongs to the film's superficiality; let me repeat that *I Want You* is not particularly good. But when we consider that no one in *Death of a Salesman* ever suggests that Willy Loman should be taken to a psychiatrist—again a philistine consideration—that superficiality begins to seem a kind of virtue.

It would be a mistake, however, to set up too sharp an opposition between these films. *Death of a Salesman* owes much of its success to the illusion of just such an opposition: it appeals to people who are dissatisfied with pictures like *I Want You*. And their dissatisfaction is justified; taken in the abstract, perhaps Arthur Miller's falsifications are in some sense better than Samuel Goldwyn's, since after all we are not entirely wrong in feeling that the more pessimistic view is usually the more serious one. But the point is that Mr. Miller's view forces him continually to slight the claims of the material world which constitutes all our experience, and Mr. Goldwyn's does not. This is not enough to make *I Want You* a successful work of art, or even, except in the remotest sense, a "hope" for art: those who hope for the improvement of American movies are usually hoping for more films like *Death of a Salesman*. But we are left with the fact that *I Want You* achieves almost as a matter of course that immediate contact with material reality which, in the world as we know it, is the only possible basis for serious drama or literature, but which seems to be conspicuously lacking in much that now passes for serious. This may help to explain why the "problem" of the movies continues to intrude itself, like some awkwardly literal questioner from the back row, into the criticism of American culture.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

WILL BIRTHS OUTSTRIP MANKIND'S RESOURCES?

A Challenge to Human Ingenuity

MORTON CLURMAN

ALMOST forty years ago an agricultural economist, George F. Warren, wrote: "The questions whether our soil is exhausted and how we are to be fed in the future, are constantly being discussed in newspapers and magazines." This ought to remind us that the modern food-versus-population controversy is not simply a product of post-World War II pessimism. It has been around for a long time. But it has been percolating with exceptional vigor ever since William Vogt's *Road to Survival* and Fairfield Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet* reopened the dispute four years ago. Thus, a dispatch from Rome tells us that even Pope Pius's recent statement affirming the opposition of the Church to birth control was made only after a careful study of the population-versus-food question.

In the days before I. B. M. machines it was possible for any reasonably intelligent man to get into the middle of a discussion like this and take his stand; the facts, being unavailable, played a minor role in shaping opinion. Today, in the age of science, any argument not buttressed by a maze of figures is considered suspect. But where, as in the present case, both sides to a dispute can assemble an equally impressive stack of charts, tables, and diagrams, the statistics may merely bury the argument without settling it.

For example, the neo-Malthusians, or pessimists, tell us that every year the world's population is growing by slightly more than 1 per cent. That makes twenty-five million more mouths to feed every twelve months and this number accelerates as the earth's population expands. At the present rate of increase, the world's population, now almost two and a quarter billion, will reach three billion in fifty years, over four billion in one hundred years, nearly eighteen billion in two hundred years, and one hundred billion in four hundred years.

Now, only 2 per cent of the earth's surface is crop land on which food can be grown efficiently, which means that there are about two arable acres per person. This figure is shrinking rapidly as population increases, yet at the present time more than three-fifths of the world's inhabitants live on near-starvation rations. With the United States' farming practices, which are superior to most, it takes two and one-half acres to keep one person well fed and properly clothed. So our worldwide two-acre average is already too low—with the future gloomy indeed.

But things look a lot brighter when the optimists take their turn at the computing machines. Food production can be increased at the rate of 1.5 per cent per annum—this tops the population increase by almost .5 per cent, so the table can stay well ahead of the cradle. It is only the populations in the backward, un-

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A HUNDRED and fifty years ago, a British cleric drew some startling conclusions from the fact that, while the earth's surface is limited, man's capacity for reproduction is not. Since then, Malthusian pessimism has waned and waxed, as food production surpassed or fell below the rapid growth of population. Recently, the controversy between the Cassandras and the Pollyannas has flared up again, with some authorities predicting a "population explosion" and others pooh-poohing the very notion. Here, MORTON CLURMAN takes a hard look at the statistics and the logic of both sides. Mr. Clurman was born in New York City in 1917 and was graduated from the City College of New York. He is on the staff of the American Jewish Committee.

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industrialized portions of the globe that are increasing at an alarming rate—with the industrialization and urbanization of these backward lands their population growth will begin to taper off in a civilized fashion. Even more promising are the spectacular developments in technology that promise to master nature's secret of food manufacture by photosynthesis and thus provide cheap and abundant food for many billions more people. In addition, new agricultural techniques combined with the development of new species such as hybrid corn are opening an unprecedented era of abundance. Thus, in 1944, farmers in the United States harvested 44 per cent more corn, using only 5 per cent more acreage, than they did in any year from 1935 to 1939. This represents a truly spectacular increase, in less than a decade, of 32 per cent per acre. The yield per acre of cotton jumped from 174 pounds per acre in 1928-1932 to 260 pounds in 1941-1945—an increase of 50 per cent in a dozen years. What we can do, so can others; the world has little to worry about. So runs the argument of the optimists.

Whom are we to believe?

THE argument of the pessimists goes back to Malthus, who said in the first of his three main propositions: "It may be safely pronounced, therefore, that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years, or increases in a geometrical ratio. . . . Considering the present average state of the earth, the means of subsistence, under conditions most favorable to human industry, could not be made to increase faster than in an arithmetical ratio. . . . Supposing the present population to be a thousand millions, the human species would increase as the numbers 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256; and subsistence as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; in two centuries the population would be to the means of subsistence as 256 to 9, in three centuries as 4,096 to 13. . . ."

But, of course, there are the "population checks," which Malthus divided into two kinds —"positive" and "preventive." Positive checks were those imposed by nature—famine, disease, wars, and vice; while preventive checks were those voluntarily imposed by man on himself, such as celibacy, delayed marriage, or continence after marriage. Birth control, except when based on continence, Malthus classified as vice.

Under certain specific conditions, the Malthusian doctrine does have an important measure of truth. It is drawn by analogy from the least rigorous of the natural sciences, biology, and it can be applied to man in direct proportion to man's social proximity to the animal world. In pre-industrial and primitive agrarian economies, the food supply *is* the chief limiting factor on population growth and it is easily possible to demonstrate this relation.

Some two years ago, Warren S. Thompson, director of the Scripps Foundation for Research in Population Problems, did just that in an article in *Scientific American* (February 1950). He analyzed the doubling of Sweden's population from 1751 to 1850. He showed that although the rate of increase for the entire century averaged 6.7 per 1,000 yearly, actually there were enormous fluctuations varying from a natural increase of 16 per 1,000 during one year to a decrease of 27 per 1,000 in another. In these fluctuations, the key factor was the death rate, which varied far more than the birth rate. In every year in which deaths were abnormally high, says Thompson, "the high death rate was preceded by a period of scarcity of food, generally accompanied by an increase in epidemic disease." Food also affected the birth rates, though less severely, with good harvests being followed by an increase in marriages, and a corresponding rise in births. Thus, the death rate followed the harvest curve inversely, the marriage and birth rates followed it directly.

But when the first proposition of Malthus is applied to a Western industrial civilization it collapses completely. For this proposition assumes that population always and inevitably presses on food supplies—in other words, that there is a high and constant birth rate. Yet the Swedish figures, extended beyond 1850 to modern times, show that the conquest of epidemic and famine has not only lowered the mortality rate from about 20 per thousand to less than 10, but that, at the same time, the birth rate has declined from 31 per 1,000 to about 14 per 1,000 in the 1930's, indicating a virtually stationary population. Sweden typifies the highly un-Malthusian population situation in the industrial nations—low birth rates, low death rates, and a low or stationary rate of natural increase.*

* The postwar spurt in births, which sent Sweden's rate from a low of 13.7 in 1934 to a recent high of 20.6 in 1944, and the United States rate from a low of 16.6 in 1933 to a recent high of 25.8 in 1947, has somewhat upset the population experts. There are indications, however, that the birth rate has again begun to recede.

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To understand how badly the Malthusian proposition really operates when applied indiscriminately to the modern world, one has only to stand the axiom on its head and observe its superiority in this inverted form. In other words, a very good case can be made out for the thesis that population increase is *inversely* proportional to the food supply. Ireland, Scandinavia, and Australia, all areas that consume more than 3,000 calories daily, have a low rate of natural increase. India, North Africa, and Central America, which consume less than 2,000 calories daily, have a high rate of natural increase. In general, it is in the areas that live on a subsistence food level that population is increasing fastest. Countries in which there is plenty to eat have relatively stationary populations.

THE operation of Malthus's powerful law has been dampened, not so much by the newfangled techniques of Farmer Simpson, as a *Time* article too glibly put it, as by the fact that human beings obstinately refuse to act like fruit flies as soon as they discover the conveniences of modern civilization. Social and cultural factors, rather than the bio-technical one of food production, have proved decisive in determining the rate of natural increase in industrial societies. But most of the world today is still living under pre-industrial conditions, where Malthus's doctrine *is* applicable and where the population *does* fluctuate very much according to the availability of food. It is the failure to recognize this distinction in population patterns, to narrow the field to specific areas and sharply defined problems, that gives most of the writing on the subject, whether pro-Malthusian or con, a nebulous, inconclusive quality.

A happy exception to this rule is the previously mentioned article by Warren Thompson. Thompson divides the countries of the world into three areas. Group A, consisting of most of Western Europe, Oceania, and North America, makes up about 20 per cent of the world's population. It is characterized by low birth rates, low death rates, high caloric intake (about 3,000 per day), and a relatively stable population. The food problem of these countries is negligible, and there seems to be no doubt of their ability to feed their inhabitants in any foreseeable future.

Group B, another 20 per cent of the world's population, consists of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Japan, Spain, and a few South American countries like Brazil and Argentina. Here there is a low but rising industrial productivity, a high but falling birth rate, and a medium but falling death rate. These areas have the highest rates of natural increase, largely because their birth rate is not falling as fast as the death rate. Since they enjoy a food level of 2,300 to 2,800 calories per day—somewhat better than subsistence—the food-versus-population problem in these countries will depend largely on how fast they industrialize and what measures are taken to increase their food supplies.

Group C is the critical area. Taking in Asia and its adjacent islands, most of Africa, and most of South and Central America, it contains three-fifths of the world's population, lives on a semi-starvation level, about 2,000 calories per day or less, and starkly illustrates the Malthusian pressure of population on food. The area has a high and constant birth rate, and a high but widely fluctuating death rate, which drops when the harvests are good, soars when they are bad. It is an area whose perpetual state of crisis is broken only by periodic catastrophes. The immensity of its food problems reminds one of the grim joke Jimmy Durante used to tell about his family, consisting of his "mudder, fadder, and fourteen kids," all of whom lived in a leaky one-room shack with nobody working. If they were lucky they had a dry crust of bread for them all to gnaw on. Things went on this way for a number of years but then, said Durante, "came the depression."

It is this area that constitutes the real problem—the three-fifths of mankind that live on a starvation level. They have probably always lived this way, but what is different today is that assorted political fanaticisms are sweeping these countries on an unprecedented scale, and are combining with hunger to make an explosive mixture. And with Russia busily tossing matches, a problem that the richer nations once might shrug off now threatens to ignite the world.

THE virtue of Warren Thompson's approach is that by narrowing the field, it permits the problem of food versus population to be stated in a meaningful way. In terms of pointing the way toward solutions, however, it is still too broad. The variations among the group C countries are too large, the unique political and social factors too many, to permit of any general analysis. Actually, each country must be examined separately in order to see a way through the dilemma.

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Kingsley Davis's imposing and remarkable book *The Population of India and Pakistan* (Princeton University Press, 1951) is an excellent example of the techniques which must be applied to make any sense out of the great Malthusian debate. Davis's work points up some of the enormous difficulties in understanding the demographic dynamics of these countries, or even in gathering the vital statistics. Tigers with undiscriminating appetites have combined with irritable villagers to keep the mortality rate of census-takers high. The 1931 census had to contend with a Census Boycott Sunday organized by Indian nationalists. A religious sect urged everybody to list a certain religion regardless of the truth. In one province, a primitive group, the Bhils, would not have their houses enumerated on superstitious grounds, while in Burma the householders objected for aesthetic reasons. In the Shan states, the last survivor of a bandit raid, convinced that his number was up when his house was listed as the thirteenth in a block, went into the woods and committed suicide. Elsewhere, superstitious extroverts disemboweled the census-takers.

Mortality statistics present special problems in India because most people die without ever having seen a doctor. The death is usually reported, if at all, by the village headman or *chaukidar*. He is always ill-paid, often illiterate, and seems to operate on the slogan: "When in doubt call it fever." Thus, 60 per cent of the recorded deaths are ascribed to "fever," over 25 per cent to "other causes." The cause of death in India is consequently unknown in at least 85 per cent of the reported cases.

Despite these difficulties, Davis tells us that India's statistics are actually far more reliable than that of any other country of comparable backwardness. British scholarship and persistence, he believes, are responsible for this relative reliability. Whatever its other shortcomings, the British administration did bequeath a tremendous fund of scholarly information, together with a bureaucratic apparatus and an objective attitude that are probably unique among areas that have recently become self-governing.

INDIA'S demographic statistics go back to 1871, when the first census estimated a population of 255 million. The next fifty years were marked by the same wide variation in death rates and population growth that Thompson showed for Sweden in the century between 1750 and 1850. Thus, in 1871-1881, the population rose only 2 million, but the following decade the jump was 15 million. Then, in 1891-1901 the increase sank again to 3 million, but it leaped to almost 18 million during the next ten years. In the succeeding decade, the increase once more dropped, this time to less than 3 million.

The reason for these peculiar fluctuations is known, and it fits in well with the general picture of the Malthusian countries. The Indian famine of 1876 slashed that decade's increase; the decade of 1891-1901 was marked by another famine; the 1911-1921 period was punctuated by the terrible influenza epidemic of 1918. Over the entire fifty years from 1871 to 1921 the population of India and what is now Pakistan rose from 255 to only 305 million, or about .35 per cent each year.

Then the picture changed completely. The 1931 census showed a ten-year growth of 33 million. The 1941 census came through with another ten-year jump of more than 50 million. And the recently released 1951 census indicates a combined population for India and Pakistan of 437 million—a decade's growth of 48 million. Thus, in the thirty years since 1921, India's population increased 132 million or about 1.2 per cent each year. What has happened is that the famine and epidemic peaks have been lopped off, leaving a huge predominance of births over deaths to swell the natural increase. For, as a result of the consolidation of British rule in the 19th century, local isolation was broken down by the construction of railroads and hard-surfaced roads, civil war and banditry were suppressed, a tremendous irrigation program was undertaken, and famine on a large scale was brought under control—India's last great famine came in 1898. (The famine of 1943 took one and a half to three million lives—by Indian standards a small affair.)

There remained the problem of epidemic disease. Plague, which was virtually unknown in India until 1896, killed over a million in 1904. For twenty years it raged periodically. Then, new methods of rat control were devised, vaccines and new drugs were developed, and, perhaps most important, a new race of rats developed that seems immune to bubonic germs. Since 1924 there have been no major outbreaks of plague. Smallpox, another mass killer in the 19th century, was brought under control through vaccination by 1900. Kala-azar, an extremely deadly epidemic disease that used to wipe out whole villages and areas, was brought

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under successful control by 1923. Malaria, now believed to be the greatest killer of all, is being reduced by modern drugs and DDT. Tuberculosis, on the other hand, appears to be increasing in India, probably because those who formerly would have died in epidemics or famine now live to fall prey to it. Diarrhea, dysentery, and typhoid take a huge toll of infants, but the use of DDT, sulfa drugs, and T.A.B. vaccine for typhoid are reducing these to manageable proportions. All these medical advances have brought the death rate down from a high of 47 per 1,000 to 31.2 in 1941, with the 1951 census revealing a further drop.

THE 1951 census indicates that the population of India and Pakistan is increasing at about 1.16 per cent annually. This is not an abnormally high rate. Percentage-wise it is lower than the present United States rate of increase (about 1.4 per cent, more than the world average) and almost exactly matches the world rate. Nor can India be considered overpopulated in the sense of being absolutely overcrowded; with her population density of 270 per square mile, she compares favorably with the 718 of England and Wales, Holland's 717, Japan's 500, Germany's 352, and Italy's 380.

These figures illustrate the relative nature of overpopulation. It is population in proportion to developed resources that actually counts. Had India a viable, thriving economy, its present rate of population increase would present no overwhelming problem. But how is such an India to be created? Unfortunately, the pressure of population hampers the very process of industrialization which eventually could solve India's problems.

India's agriculture graphically illustrates her dilemma. Overpopulation is probably its chief problem and leads to a complicated chain of ills. The growing population, unable to find employment in the insufficiently industrialized urban areas, competes desperately for a scrap of land on which to live. This sends the value of land up, the value of the tenant's labor down. With labor so cheap and land so dear, there is little incentive for capital investment on the part of the landlord, while the tenant is generally unable to afford any improvements, and is reluctant in any case to make them on another's land. This fierce struggle for land, which is literally a struggle for life, causes continual reductions in the size of holdings (from 2.23 cultivated acres per farm person in 1890 to 1.9 in 1939), and most areas have long since passed the point of diminishing returns as far as the application of labor to land is concerned. So to India's scantness of acreage per cultivator is added the problem of low productivity per acre.

All these misfortunes—and many others not even hinted at—have combined to make India one of the poorest nations in the world. Despite the most arduous labor, the average Indian eats about 1,750 calories per day (as against a needed 2,400 to 3,000). Clearly, undernourishment and dire want can be remedied only by increasing both agricultural and industrial production faster than the population is increasing. This is a large order. For one thing, the utter poverty makes the accumulation of a surplus for investment very difficult. And even assuming that some way could be found of quickly increasing the food supply, either through borrowed capital or by revolutionary new techniques requiring little capital, the population, under present conditions, would tend to rise in true Malthusian fashion so quickly that the per capita food consumption and income would probably remain about the same.

The only way of breaking the vicious circle, according to Davis, is by a simultaneous threefold program of agricultural reform and rehabilitation, rapid industrialization, and government-sponsored birth control. New industrial ventures would absorb the surplus farm population, an essential precondition to increasing farm productivity both per capita and absolutely. The land, instead of being "divided up," would be consolidated into larger parcels by socialized forms of agriculture like cooperatives and collectives, or by subsidy of the more efficient individual peasants, or by any combination of the two. Birth control would further ease the population pressure; at the same time, the growing urban centers would also tend to reduce the birth rate by shifting the population from a Malthusian to a non-Malthusian social pattern.

Since industrialization itself would create a non-Malthusian country, the question may be raised as to why this alone would not suffice for a population policy. Davis cites several objections: first, population pressure retards industrialization by making it difficult to accumulate a capital surplus; secondly, even the most rapid industrialization would take at least a generation; in that time, judging from the present pattern, population would have grown enormously, creating new problems and certainly robbing the country of much of the benefits

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of industrialization. Finally, and most important, industrialization without population control would almost certainly necessitate a dictatorship of the Russian type which would accumulate capital by forced collectivization, ruthless exploitation of labor, and minute regulation of every phase of life.

Is this proposed three-pronged solution feasible in terms of the social and political realities of India today? The only rational answer to such a question is—perhaps. Japan managed to become an industrial nation in hardly more than a generation, without the horrors that accompanied the industrialization of Russia; and yet, in 1870, at the beginning of its industrialization effort, Japan was almost as densely populated as India is today—235 per square mile compared with India's 270. But Japan had a far more efficient agriculture; a thriving pre-industrial handicraft system which was readily converted into industrial workshops and could provide thousands of skilled artisans for industry; and a stable and cohesive ruling class with long experience, whose government carefully nurtured and subsidized the growing industries.

India has none of these. Her agriculture is miserably inefficient; her handicraft industry was virtually destroyed by the British government in India in collaboration with British manufacturers, who flooded the unprotected Indian market with cheap textiles; while her governing regime, with little experience and less cohesion, seems to be seated on the lid of a perpetual political volcano.

Fortunately, this gloomy balance sheet is not the whole picture. India's natural resources are incomparably greater than Japan's. Indeed, India's natural wealth is greater than that of any other country except Russia and the United States. She has immense coal and iron deposits lying close together; a wide distribution of other metallic ores, and large reserves of oil; in short, most of the raw materials for a thriving industry.

The problem is one of organization, not of resources; and that is mainly a question of politics. A government that could unite decisive sections of the population behind a program of birth control, agricultural rehabilitation, and directed investment in industry could lead India into a non-Malthusian future with relative freedom from coercion. A government that fails to win such support will either be helpless in the face of an ever-mounting cycle of food crises or else be forced to impose on the nation a terroristic dictatorship that will carry out a program of forced agricultural collectivization and rapid industrialization at the cost of millions of lives.

Davis's study of India provides the necessary clues for a solution to the whole problem of food versus population. It would appear that nations like Egypt, India, and China, until they produce a predominantly urban culture, will have a Malthusian population growth, fluctuating with variations in the food supply—unless an aggressive birth-control program is instituted. But birth control is no final solution for these nations. Only a vastly increased production of food and manufactured goods can provide their peoples with improved living standards. However, birth control, by easing the pressure on present resources, can make the transition easier and quicker.

What are the possibilities of the Malthusian countries adopting a vigorous birth-control policy? A great deal of nonsense has recently been written about this question. William Bullitt not long ago stated that India was an unlikely field for birth control because, among other reasons, "the most widespread object of worship among the Hindus is the male organ of generation. . . ." Unfortunately for this thesis, the Christians and Moslems of India, despite a more conventional form of worship, have a higher birth rate than the Hindus.

Actually, as Davis points out, an intensive government-sponsored birth-control campaign has never been tried, and we just don't know what the results of such a campaign would be. But the chances of the Malthusian nations adopting large-scale birth-control programs are not great. Aside from the sociological and technological difficulties involved, which are certainly not small, prevailing ideologies seem to be linked in an unconscious conspiracy against it. The Communists, whose approach, terminology, and influence are great even in those countries that have formally banned the party, are committed to the creed that reactionary capitalism is the unique cause of all evil and that any other issue is a trickily conceived attempt to stifle the class struggle. Nationalist sentiment, especially in those countries recently liberated from Western domination, also tends to regard with suspicion any argument that does not assign exclusive villainy to Western imperialism. In India, nationalists accustomed to refuting the overpopulation argument as simply another rationalization for British rule continue to flail

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away, like punch-drunk fighters, at an imaginary enemy. The Roman Catholic Church, although numerically weak in most of the Malthusian nations (though not all, e.g. Puerto Rico), acts nevertheless as a compact opposition that exerts considerable influence, especially in comparison with the weak and poorly organized birth-control advocates.

THIS coalition of Communism, nationalism, and Catholicism would be formidable enough if Western thinkers were unanimous on the advisability of limiting population growth at least for the immediate future. But even among liberals, generally the least prejudiced group with regard to birth control, there are many who feel that any organized effort along these lines is a sop to "reaction." For them, the premise of the greatest good for the greatest number usually proceeds, by a peculiar involution of logic, to the conclusion that the greater the number, the greater the good, and they often look on proposals for limiting population growth as a slightly indecent scheme for curtailing the sum total of human happiness. Beyond this, they unfortunately tend to derive their position in many matters by a kind of conditioned reflex to the opposition. They pick up a book by one of the more extreme neo-Malthusians, and find it advocating population reduction on a mass scale with an almost genocidal fervor, and lamenting public health programs because the millions of lives saved have made the earth too crowded. The whole thing has a strong odor of callousness and isolationist greed, and they consider this sufficient reason for dismissing the entire problem.

Dr. Josue de Castro, Chairman of the Executive Council of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, and author of *The Geography of Hunger* (Little, Brown, 1952), is such a liberal. He believes that everyone in the world should have enough to eat and that everyone can have enough to eat if only we set about it with a will. The neo-Malthusians irritate him very much. So in order to prove how wrong they are, he sets out to establish a thesis which is at least as fantastic as the drummings of his most fanatical opponents. In his own words, "Hunger is responsible for the overproduction of human beings, excessive in number and inferior in quality." Give everybody three squares a day, and the birth rate will drop like magic.

His argument is at least ingenious. Laboratory experiments with rats show that as the protein content of their diet goes up their fertility goes down. On 10 per cent protein, the average rat produces 23 offspring; on 22 per cent, his batting average drops to 14. And that's how it is with people: "The groups with highest fertility," Dr. de Castro declares, "are those who have the lowest percentage of complete proteins, animal proteins, in their regular diet. The highest birth rates in the world are registered by certain peoples of the Far East, Africa, and Latin America, where the proportion of animal products in the habitual rations does not reach 5 per cent of the total food consumed. In contrast to this, the lowest birth rates exist among the peoples of Western Europe, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, where the proportion of foods of animal origin reaches, respectively, 17 per cent (Western Europe); 25 per cent (United States); and 36 per cent (Australia and New Zealand)." Dr. de Castro then appends a chart of 14 nations beginning with Formosa—birth rate 45.6, protein consumption 4.7 grams daily—and ending with Sweden—birth rate 15, protein consumption 62.6 grams daily.

Evidently, Dr. de Castro is not completely satisfied with his protein-deficiency theory of overpopulation. He offers an additional explanation of why hungry people tend to overpopulate the globe. Chronic hunger, it seems, sharpens the sex appetite.

Unfortunately for Dr. de Castro's central thesis, the population of pre-industrial nations, as the experience of 18th-century Sweden and 19th-century India proves, tends to soar, not decline, with the food supply. There is not the slightest historical evidence that more or better food by itself cuts down the birth rate. All it does is reduce the death curve. The experiment with the rats is interesting. But the trouble is—they're just rats. Dr. de Castro might try feeding potatoes to tigers, and find out how fertile *they* are on a non-protein diet.

The chart with Formosa at the top and Sweden at the bottom is interesting too, but there are some problems there. Australia, with the third highest protein consumption, has the third lowest birth rate—18.0. That is the 1940 figure. The 1947 birth rate for Australia was 24, that of New Zealand 26.4. How account for this jump? Did the two countries stop eating meat? Even infertile, meat-eating Sweden, with a birth rate of 15 down at the bottom of Dr. de Castro's list, jumped to 20.6 in 1944.

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As for the theory that chronic hunger increases the sexual appetite and that this accounts for increased birth rates, it should be remembered that par for the human species is about one child a year. No matter how attenuated the sexual instinct in meat-eating countries, it is hard to believe that couples would not manage enough acts of sexual intercourse to produce a whopping birth rate, were it not for all the other factors that play no role in Dr. de Castro's theory.

In all fairness to the author, it should be admitted that he does have a corner of the truth. The trouble is, he is so anxious to beat down all opposition that, instead of using this corner of the truth, he exploits it. He understands that hunger is not necessarily caused by population density, that a nation like Holland with 717 inhabitants per square mile can be well fed, while Libya with 2.3 per square mile can be poorly fed. But he feels compelled to draw the extreme conclusion that there is *never* any necessary connection between population density and hunger. Doubtless, if world food production were placed on a rational, scientific basis and distributed equally, even the poorest and most densely populated nations would have enough to eat—at least for a while. But it is the reality of today's world, with its national borders, jealousies, and power blocs, its cartels, artificial shortages, subsidized waste, and inefficient agriculture, not the utopias of tomorrow, that the Malthusian nations must face now and for an indefinite time to come. Under these conditions, even the most sanguine optimist must admit that overpopulation makes the immediate problems so much the more acute.

But beyond this, given a continuous rate of increase, absolute world overpopulation independent of the food supply is not only possible but absolutely certain. If some great chemical genius should figure out a way to make sirloin steaks out of air, water, and earth mixed in a bathtub with a wooden paddle, the food problem would become a thing of the past, but the problem of ultimate overpopulation would not. For the total weight of the earth is 10^{25} pounds. If the world's population continued to increase at the rate of 1 per cent per year, which is slightly less than its present rate, in about 3,000 years the weight of human beings would equal the earth's weight—that is, the entire substance of the earth would have been digested by human beings! Long before that, of course, most of the human race would be crushed to death by the sheer weight of their fellow men. Or, to confine the horror picture to our own hemisphere, if the population of the United States continues to increase at its present rate, in less than nine hundred years the entire country would be packed as tightly as a subway car in the rush hour.

Fortunately, nobody expects the present population increases to continue for any long period of time. Nevertheless, this *reductio ad absurdum* does point up the fact that optimum population may be determined by other than food factors. Contemporary headlines tell the same story. A 327-billion-dollar American economy is consuming raw materials at a rate that compels Britain to cut back her own production. Yet these raw material shortages crop up in a world that is still largely unindustrialized. The industrialization on a large scale of Asia, South America, and Africa would certainly accentuate the shortages to a tremendous degree, even if we assume that some new sources of raw materials would be developed in the process; consequently the standard of life of the more prosperous nations would surely fall. Conceivably, technology may be able to remedy some of these shortages by substitution, syntheses, or even transmutation. But the fact is that the pinch in raw materials is showing up here and now when the miracles still seem a long way off.

There are other aspects of the overpopulation problem that are not so susceptible to quantitative evaluation. Differential fertility is one of these. Robert C. Cook in his *Human Fertility: the Modern Dilemma* (William Sloane Associates, 1951) explores this question at length. He demonstrates that the least educated third of the population, at current rates of reproduction, will produce almost two-thirds of our great-grandchildren. In a country of universal compulsory education, there is probably a fairly close relation between degree of education and innate mental capacity, although other factors such as income, regional differences, and ethnic customs certainly play some role. If mental capacity is assumed to be even partially hereditary, then Cook's argument is impressive evidence that the nation is going mentally downhill.

This is a problem peculiar to the industrialized, non-Malthusian nations. In primitive economies, where the struggle for existence is grim, intelligence is probably an important factor in determining who lives and who dies. In the industrialized nations, the competition for

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social advancement takes the place of the almost non-existent struggle for physical survival. And since limitation of families is a means of furthering the individual's social position, the more successful are weeded out by their own efforts. Thus, in those nations where human intelligence has been most successfully applied in creating material well-being, nature seems to take her revenge by discouraging intelligence from reproducing itself. This is a population problem for the non-Malthusian nations today, not in some hypothetical future.

The aesthetic aspects of overpopulation are also worth some thought. The early American pioneers were said to get restless whenever they could see the smoke of a neighbor's chimney a couple of miles away. Today, the conventional middle-class utopia "away from it all" is a six-room ranchhouse on a 50-by-100-foot plot somewhere in the suburbs of a large city. The relativism of the concept of crowding may be readily admitted; still, the area of a nation is constant and the result of an expanding population is to reduce the average acreage available for the enjoyment of the individual, whether in national parks or forests, open countryside, or simply his own backyard.

By overemphasizing the food aspects of the problem, the neo-Malthusians have done a disservice to the population question. Their claim that the world is teetering on the brink of mass starvation is unproved and unprovable, and has simply served as a convenient straw man for the opposition to knock down. But knocking over the straw man will not deal with the ultimate contradictions implied by a prospect of perpetual human increase; nor will it solve the real population problems that exist today. Each country has its own variant of these problems and since major decisions, at least for some time to come, will be made on a national basis, it would seem advisable for nations to set about studying these problems with at least a fraction of the energy they devote to other questions. After all, even the most mechanical utopian could hardly be entranced by the spectacle of a mass of jabbering robots operating a mountain of automatic machinery. For the more fortunate nations, it is time, as Julian Huxley has said, to pay some attention to the quality as well as the quantity of their citizens. For the less fortunate—and that is the great majority—the simple question of numbers still poses a most important human problem.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

On Jewish Humor

To the Editor of Commentary:

"Only the angels in Heaven agree on everything," my *zaydeh* told me when I was a little boy. Yet I dare say that, were it required of the angels to formulate a definition of humor, there would be as wide divergence of opinion among them as there has been on the subject among writers from Aristotle down to Bergson and Freud. And I am even more certain that, were a definition of *Jewish* humor in question, the angels would stand as opposed to one another as Mr. David Daiches and I are.

My definition of Jewish humor, which I concretized in my *Treasury of Jewish Humor*, and which Mr. Daiches rejects (Commentary, January 1952), is simply this: Jewish humor is humor created by Jews about Jews anywhere in the world, regardless of the language in which it was written or the epoch in which it was produced. I was led to this view by the historical fact that for some three thousand years Jews have been a global people with an ethnic-cultural continuity, although with wide variations. Consequently, I culled the selections for my anthology from every language source available to me: from Yiddish and Hebrew literature especially, then from English, German, French, Dutch, Hungarian, Russian, etc.

Since humor is a creative expression of life, Jewish humor is a product of Jewish group life *anywhere* in the world, whatever the degree of piety or assimilation. This axiom I emphasized in the introduction to my book: "In almost every section . . . will be found characterizations bearing striking resemblance to one another, and this notwithstanding the fact that they were written in different languages, countries and times. This is due to the fact that wherever Jews have lived they have had common traditions to draw from and almost the same historic experiences. Similar circumstances give rise to similar psychologic types. . . ."

Mr. Daiches challenges the validity of my definition and the character of my selections as well. To my conception he opposes his own: "For Jewish humor, so far as it can be clearly differentiated from other kinds of humor, is a product of the ghetto. . . ." Now Mr. Daiches does not have in mind just any kind of ghetto; he is specifically referring to the East European ghetto, and there only beginning with the enlightenment movement at the turn of the 19th century. However, he observes with finality, ". . . that Jewish humor exists, is hardly to be questioned. Or rather, that Jewish humor existed."

"Existed," concludes Mr. Daiches. He plainly believes that Jewish humor no longer exists, is no longer being created. That is, it did exist once, but *only in the East European ghetto.* And when the ghetto came to an end Jewish humor died with it. Of course, it still "exists," but only like a unique cultural monument of the past. As for Jewish humor created outside the East European ghetto—it is not "genuine"!

But Mr. Daiches' perfectionist preoccupation with what constitutes the genuine in Jewish humor leads him to further delimitations, refinements, and qualifications. His modified definition soon becomes perilously attenuated and dogmatic: "Jewish humor at its most authentic arose from the clash between a vocabulary geared to a life of religious observance and a deeply ironical skepticism: as the latter comes more and more to dominate the former, the humor becomes less and less specifically Jewish, and when finally we get the Western Jewish intellectual playing his part as ironist in a sophisticated Western community, the Jewish ties are generally lost altogether."

Now no one can question that religious skepticism generated much Jewish humor, yet it is baffling to me how Mr. Daiches can dismiss as less authentic other equally valid sources of Jewish humor produced by the selfsame milieu. For example: the poverty and lack of opportunity in the ghetto gave rise to an infinitely more substantial body of Jewish humor than that of religious skepticism. It included an entire gallery of tragi-comic misfits: *batlanim, shlemiels, shlimazls, luftmenshen,* pipe-dreamers, delirious fortune-hunters, "geniuses," and God knows what else!

As a historian of Jewish humor Mr. Daiches is highly vulnerable. His claim that there is no humor in the Bible is unfounded. Any Bible student can point out to him innumerable passages of irony and satire—for example, in Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and in the narrative about

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the prophet Micah. Furthermore, Mr. Daiches' positive denial that an "authentic" Jewish humor existed before the Haskalah penetrated the ghetto is indeed puzzling. Is it possible that he is unfamiliar with the wealth of anecdotes, fables, exempla, witticisms, and aphorisms in the Talmud and Midrash? He will find in them the original matrix, the intellectual pattern, the very soul of much of the Jewish irony and wit he erroneously claims as the exclusive, "authentic" creation of the latter-day Polish and Russian ghetto.

I, for one, wish to believe in a *living* continuity of Jewish culture, not just in a frozen and "closed" heritage. Whatever forms the literature created by Jews about Jewish life may take in the unpredictable future they will still be *Jewish* to me. Change is as dynamic a process in civilizations as it is in nature.

The insecurity of our times for Jews, luridly high-lighted by the Nazi slaughter of one-third of the Jewish people, has inflicted psychic trauma on many sensitive intellectuals. Lately there has been a marked trend among Jewish writers to seek escape from the disturbing reality in reminiscence of the East European ghetto. They idealize and sentimentalize it *ad nauseam*. They gloss over all of its well-known warpings: its meanness and squalor, its hunger and despair, its lack of opportunity and stagnation. In carefully censored retrospect they see only the joyous, the morally elevating, the religiously ecstatic facets. They look back upon it nostalgically as a dreamlike, never-to-return Golden Age. . . .

Into such dismal snares and delusions can "ghetto-theories" about the only "authentic" and "genuine" Jewish cultural values lead the unwary, no matter how intelligent and sincere they may be.

NATHAN AUSUBEL

New York City

Mr. Daiches Replies

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Ausubel defines Jewish humor as "humor created by Jews about Jews anywhere in the world." That still would not justify the inclusion of such things as the poem by Dorothy Parker which I cited: that was not about Jews. (Or does Mr. Ausubel really mean "humor either by or about Jews"?) My definition of Jewish humor would be "humor created by Jews which, because of its Jewish origin, is different in some salient respects from humor created by anyone else." The difference between Mr. Ausubel's definition and mine is simple but fundamental.

The trouble with Mr. Ausubel's definition is that it doesn't necessarily guarantee any distinctively Jewish quality in the humor at all. It reminds me of those writers who assess "the Jewish contribution to civilization" by listing scientists, doctors, and artists who were of Jewish birth or origin. Just as I would argue that the real Jewish contribution to civilization consists of attitudes and ideas developed by Jewish tradition and recognizable as distinctively Jewish, at least in their own time, so I would argue that to talk about Jewish humor which is not distinctively Jewish in nature as well as authorship is to set up an unreal or at least useless category. A rabbi slipping on a banana skin is not a Jewish joke as I would define that phrase.

It seemed to me that the most characteristic form of specifically Jewish humor in relatively modern times was the ghetto humor I tried to describe. That is dying out, and I see no specifically Jewish kind of humor replacing it. But to make this point is not to idealize the ghetto or to look at it as "a dreamlike, never-to-be-returned Golden Age." I think the ghetto was a nightmare, and it is most illogical for Mr. Ausubel to accuse me of reminiscing about it delightedly simply because I point out that it did produce some characteristic and some valuable phenomena. Even the concentration camps produced their own grim humor, but to admit this is not to idealize them!

Humor of course exists in Talmud and Midrash, but it is not, so far as I am aware, a kind of Jewish humor flourishing today. And I must confess that I do not find Biblical irony or satire humorous. It is clear that Mr. Ausubel and I would define not only "Jewish humor" but "humor" differently. I really don't need "any Bible student" to point out to me "humorous" passages in the Bible. As one who once arduously worked over the text of the Bible with a toothcomb collating the Hebrew text with a great variety of English and other translations, I think I can claim to know that book as well as most. But I still don't think it funny—anywhere.

DAVID DAICHES

Cambridge, England

America in Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Hal Lehrman ("When Americans Emigrate to Israel," February 1952) really does an excellent job in describing the ideological, emotional, and practical difficulties facing the American pioneer in Israel. There is one point which I feel, however, should be added.

To my mind, the greatest conflict which arises within the mind of the American pioneer is the adjustment which the American has to

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make with respect to the place of America and the American way of life in his new *Weltanschauung*. The act of emigration from America must have been preceded by at least a partial rejection of America, perhaps its "crass materialism," or its "outdated" bourgeois standards; perhaps, as would be true in the case of a few American immigrants, they sought in Israel a place where their religious life as strictly observant Jews would be simpler than in the United States.

Upon his arrival in Israel, the American finds, to his amazement and sometimes to his dismay, that the very America which he has rejected is the idol of practically all the population of Israel (with the exception of those who view Russia as the Eden of the 20th century). Not only does America spell the ultimate in technical advancement, at least so far as the Israeli is concerned; not only does everyone ape the American, whether in style of dressing, or in the type of magazines one reads or publishes; not only does the very word "American," whether incorporated into the name of a commercial concern, or added to the description of a new process or article for sale, spell immediate success. But virtually everyone talks of America as the place from which all goodness flows, and one's social prestige can be measured by the number of American relatives one has.

A lot of this is economic: the dollar and the food package from New York have a tangible value. And a lot of this is simply a fad, a craze, a Hollywooditis that has infected Israelis. And yet it makes the American immigrant frequently ask himself: "What am *I* doing here?" For in a land where everyone is yearning for a trip to America (for studies, for government business, or simply at the invitation of a newly discovered uncle in Chicago), the American often feels apologetic about having crossed the Atlantic in the "wrong" direction.

The American who had rejected American bourgeois standards suddenly finds that in Israel everyone yearns for the refrigerator, the car, the Coca-Cola (which they haven't had since Mandatory days) which he has left behind. . . .

What then can hold the American to Israel? There is the final success of the individual who in the end finds his apartment, gets his job, and learns the language. But beneath it all is the realization that the day of the opening of the first hot-dog stand on the outskirts of Beersheba is considerably closer than the day on which a *kibbutz* will be opened in America.

ABRAHAM M. HIRSCH

New York City

The Abstemious Jew

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Nathan Glazer's article "Why Jews Stay Sober" (February 1952) was both enlightening on the work done so far in this area and disturbing in some of its own interpretations.

I cite the following points:

(1) The question of whether R. F. Bales's "ritual" interpretation of Jewish moderation in drink will hold for the "Hasidim who get drunk on wine and God together." Another sect of mystics, the Sufis of Persia, used similar figurative language to express the *nature* of ultimate communion with the divine. But even granting that the Hasidim *did* use wine to attain a numinous state of mind, they still remain a decided minority in the Jewish population.

(2) The brief made for the idea that the "state of siege" under which Jews live in Western society explains their tendency to abstemiousness. This does not hold when we apply it to white-collar crime and other illegal activities such as gambling. A brief acquaintance with recent headlines shows that for some Jews the "state of the siege" has been raised here in America. . . .

(3) The idea that because "drinking affects the mind—dulls the brain," Jews are inhibited from excess. This idea may perhaps appeal to the Jewish intellectual, but how about the intellectually indifferent Jews who are often indistinguishable from their Gentile counterparts? Surely, they don't resist the temptation of alcoholic excess out of consideration for impairment of those faculties committed to earning a living driving taxis, selling shoes, or working at a garment machine.

(4) The statement that the Negro has not been a great drinker. If Mr. Glazer can obtain the facts from major distilleries he will find that in large Northern cities Negroes constitute a large, if not the single largest, market for the sale of alcoholic beverages. According to Malzberg (*Social and Biological Aspects of Mental Disease*) Negroes had a standardized rate of first admissions for alcoholic psychoses of 22.2 per 100,000 population, compared with a rate of 6.5 among the whites. . . .

Apart from these brief criticisms, Mr. Glazer has admirably summarized some leading hypotheses directed to the explanation of the marked reserve of Jews toward alcoholic beverages. Such articles do much to recommend COMMENTARY to the general reader.

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

An American View of Israel

ISRAEL: THE BEGINNING AND TOMORROW. By HAL LEHRMAN. Sloane Associates. 388 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN

THERE is little doubt that this is the best book on Israel to date. Mr. Lehrman is an acute, accurate, and tactful reporter, who knows that objectivity means not a wishy-washy refusal to take sides, but a determination to include the facts which do not square with your own convictions, and to state your opponents' position fairly before demolishing it. His book is controversial in the best sense of the word, a pugnacious contribution to the debate about Israel's future. If it receives the circulation it deserves, no one will have any excuse for being ignorant of the salient facts when he voices an opinion on the main political, religious, and economic issues which confront the Jews of the Diaspora.

In order to do justice to Mr. Lehrman, a reviewer must reveal his own prejudices. *Israel* is the work of an American Jew. I read it and react to it as a non-Jewish British Socialist, caught up almost by accident in the great events which culminated in independence. Both of us are convinced that it is a vital interest of world Jewry and of the whole Middle East that Israel should prosper. What divides us is the definition of what that vital interest is.

Consider first the differences which arise between Hal Lehrman the liberal-minded American and Richard Crossman the Englishman. Mr. Lehrman assumes that the Mandate was a period of oppression and regards it as an "anomaly" that Israel should have retained so much of British law, practice, and tradition. Israeli lawyers still await eagerly the arrival of the latest issues of the House of Lords Law Reports; Israeli soldiers and policemen are the "spit and image" of their British equivalents; Israeli politicians have deliberately postponed the composition of a written constitution on the American model; and they are showing a preference for the British system of centralized cabinet responsibility (where the aim is the continuous development of government policy under the watchful eyes of Parliament) to the American division of powers, which prevents tyranny at the cost of jeopardizing continuity. In all these respects, despite the decade of conflict, Israel accepts the British as against the American concept of democracy. Mr. Lehrman is shocked by this and believes it will be rectified in the fullness of time. But Israeli public opinion, which knows that history did not start on Independence Day, is against him. The formative years of the Yishuv were those of the Mandate, and what happened in May 1948 was not a revolution which wiped the slate clean, but a convulsion from which emerged a Jewish nation far more akin to a member of the British Commonwealth than to the United States. Politically, the American feels himself an alien in Israel. Despite Mr. Bevin, the Englishman does not. Even on such a uniquely Jewish problem as education, you can see this difference. Mr. Lehrman, as an American, is appalled at a settlement of the schools dispute which provides state aid to schools run by religious bodies or political parties. As an Englishman, I feel that this is one of those compromises which work if you want them to work. I feel glad that the Israelis are following the British example in dealing with a conflict of principle by a refusal to act on principle.

TURN now to economic and social problems. As usual, Mr. Lehrman deals very fairly with his opponents. Of course, he frankly dislikes socialism, but if he displays a little prejudice by calling the Histadrut Goliath, at least he lists Goliath's answers to the gallant David (the American investor) who has taken up his sling against him, and he admits that a Mapai-controlled government is genuinely trying to find room for free enterprise within a planned economy. Indeed, at one point he observes: "As far as one might count on probabilities, socialism in Israel could be written off for at

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least the next decade or so. During that period, investment would be about as safe there from socialist expropriation as anywhere." This is surely an exaggeration, which can only mislead the prospective American investor. The welfare state and the mixed economy, with private enterprise strictly subordinated to national interests, are not, as he suggests, mere temporary expedients of the pioneering phase, but an essential aspect of the Israeli way of life. When Mr. Lehrman asserts: "The Jew in Israel—like the Jew everywhere else, particularly the Jew of European origins—is essentially an individualist, with little stomach for a collective diet," he is surely distorting the whole history of Zionism. The Jews came to Palestine to *escape* from the individualism of the Diaspora; and it was Jewish socialism, with its refusal to colonize Palestine by normal capitalist methods, which created the elite civilization of the Yishuv. Destroy it, in a short-sighted effort to increase American capital investment, and you will turn Israel into a Levantine community, and make Tel Aviv indistinguishable from Beirut.

Here again, what antagonizes Mr. Lehrman delights an Englishman. Britain too is a welfare state, with an adverse balance of trade. We too know what it feels like to be lectured from across the Atlantic on business efficiency by American well-wishers who are convinced that their production methods can be exported as easily as a motor car. When Mr. Lehrman proposes that control of the Israeli investment program should be entrusted to American experts, my blood boils in sympathy with Ben Gurion's—although this proposal has not actually been made to us in Britain. What looks like disinterested philanthropy in Washington takes on a different appearance in the eyes of a people struggling against adversity.

In his admirable description of Israeli political parties, Mr. Lehrman indicates that Mapam stands for closer association with Russia, while the General Zionists "solicit support for their ticket in order to gratify American Jewry and 'pave the way for better relations' with the World Zionist movement." He might have added that, if the Mapam is the Russian and the General Zionists the American party, the Mapai, which vastly outnumbers them both, stands for the British connection. That connection—which he almost entirely disregards—is popular in Israel today not only through ideological affinities, but because Britain (unlike Russia or America) is no longer a Great Power able to attach political strings to its assistance, but a fellow sufferer in economic adversity, who shares Israel's ungrateful—and often ungracious—suspicion of the helping hand.

This brings me to a consideration of Mr. Lehrman's concluding chapters on the structure of American Jewish philanthropy and the politics of American Zionism. Despite the author's tact, he clearly reveals that there is a crisis in Israel's relations with American Jewry. Analyzing the conflict which arose in last summer's Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, Mr. Lehrman shrewdly observes that the besetting anxiety of every responsible Israeli leader is "the need for an 'elite' immigration from the West to counteract the Oriental flood," and that American Jewry is most unwilling to meet this need. Yet who can question the necessity for a Western "elite" immigration? As Kaplan said to me on my first meeting with him in 1946, "If the Yishuv is to remain healthy, 10 per cent of the new immigrants must be vocational Zionists from the West." Here we come up against one of the ironies of history. For the conscientious European Jew, up to the time of Hitler, there were still two choices. He could *either* become a Zionist *or* emigrate to America. The dream of Israel and the reality of the United States were two rival New Worlds, each with an absolute claim on his loyalty. To become an American, the immigrant had to cease to be a Zionist, *in the full European sense of that word.*

Have I said too much? Reporting on the Zionist Congress, Mr. Lehrman states categorically that Rose Halprin and Judith Epstein "repudiated the 'exile' theory as applying to Americans," and he adds that the American Jewish Committee "announced that it would resist and reject any doctrine or campaign to deny the *basic credo* that America, and not a Jewish state in the remote Mediterranean, was the home of Jewish Americans." There are excellent reasons why American Jewry should feel the double loyalty too heavy to bear, and claim that the theory of exile is applicable only to the Old World, from which American Jews have received a special dispensation. In repudiating the status of exile, they can then liberate themselves from the obligation to leaven the immigrant lump with their sons and daughters. But the consequences of this repudiation of European Zionism by the largest

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Jewish community are serious indeed. Israel and American Jewry will become not complementary to each other but opposed foci of Jewish life, pulling world Jewry towards two contradictory concepts of Jewish history. No Israeli, without denying his birthright, can accept the view that the proper attitude of American Jewry to the new state is that of a philanthropist whose "basic credo" is that America is his real home.

I realize that, in many quarters, even to raise this topic is regarded as treason to the true cause. Yet the issue must be faced some time or other, and the best tribute I can pay to Mr. Lehrman's brilliant book—in which so many skeletons have been taken out of the cupboard for an airing—is to pull this one from where he left it, jammed in the doorway.

The Decision of Faith

JUDAISM AND MODERN MAN. AN INTERPRETATION OF JEWISH RELIGION. By WILL HERBERG. Farrar, Straus and Young, and the Jewish Publication Society of America. 313 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by NAHUM N. GLATZER

THOSE who regard religion as merely an emotional relief, and worship and ritual as methods of producing a happy sense of communion with their co-religionists, may save themselves the trouble of reading this book; also those who want to maintain religion merely as a means toward "Jewish survival." For this is a radical and disturbing book on Judaism of a sort that American Jewish readers are not accustomed to.

For too many years now we have been blessed with "syntheses" of almost anything *and* Judaism, or with presentations of the Jewish religion that delicately avoid any reference to a living God. Among the rigidly Orthodox, to be sure, there is some traditional sanction for such an attitude: a Jewish Orthodoxy fully committed to the fulfillment of the Law shuns theological considerations. As I heard one old rabbi say, *"Mir shemen sich tsu reden vegen religia"*—"We are ashamed to talk about religion." But Jewish Orthodoxy today is not, on the whole, traditional in this sense; and the non-Orthodox avoidance of theological discussion seems quite clearly an avoidance of religion itself.

Is Judaism a religion, and, if so, does this religion imply a living God? A revision of the issue in terms of this primitive question began in this country with Ludwig Lewisohn's passionate plea for a renewed examination of our records, followed in recent years by Abraham J. Heschel's profound introspections into the core of faith and Emil L. Fackenheim's acute analyses of some specific religious motives. Herberg is the first American-born Jew to address himself seriously to the problem, speaking to "modern man in search of the absolute" and challenging him to make the "decision of faith" which is "a total personal commitment" to the true Absolute, the transcendent God. From the beginning, Herberg—with characteristic intensity—insists on the difficulty of such a commitment; it can come "only after a desperate inner struggle in which the victory is never final."

Modern man rejects the surrender to a power transcending man as being an "authoritarian religion." And this objection has some force, for the idea that a surrender in love is precisely *not* a surrender to authoritarianism can make sense only *after* the religious experience has taken hold; before that it smacks of theological quibbling. Besides, modern man is averse to a struggle in which the promised end is the abandonment of self and the gain of an as yet Unknown. The resistance to faith ends in a substitution of the self for God, but a substitution that remains incomplete and therefore unsatisfying; the assertion of the self does not destroy God but only makes him remote from man. "Our dominant religious experience," says W. H. Auden, "is our distance from God." Kafka's hero, too, is at an infinite distance from God, but in this remoteness God still—unbearably—exists. And the consciousness of this situation does not constitute religion, but only the painful knowledge of an unfulfilled need for religion.

Those who expect science to solve the mystery of existence and assure man of his place in the cosmos live in an illusion. Reason might afford man a glimpse of the rationality of the universe, but individual existence stands in the way of the thinker concerned with what Einstein calls Physical Reality; the abyss between this reality and the human person cannot be traversed: a leap must be made from the one realm to the other. So the problem of man, God, universe—unrelated one to the other—still remains with the autonomous man. Many compromise solutions are available which make life—at least practically—tolerable. But ultimately both sci-

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ence and, to use Herberg's term, "Hebraic religion," require "the leap"—the one into impersonalism, the other into personalism.

That God is not an idea—not the law, the Power, the Prime Mover—but a person, loving his creation and concerned about the individual man, is indeed a hard thing to accept rationally (just as hard as the implications of the impersonality of Physical Reality). Yet it has been the special mission of "Hebraic religion" to embody the faith in a personal God and the consequences of this faith for the status of man on earth.

It should be said that Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (whose teachings are restated in several decisive points of Herberg's book), both concerned with the God-man relation, avoid any mention of the Kierkegaardian "leap of faith" so important in Herberg's discourse. Buber speaks of a "meeting," an "encounter" between the human I and the divine Thou in the reality of life; Rosenzweig speaks of God-World-Man as the original elements which in their various connections (Creation-Revelation-Redemption) constitute reality. These formulations tend to veil the logical necessity for a "leap," and it is noteworthy that Herberg in his struggle for the personal God has not chosen to avoid or to undervalue this crucial issue.

There is one quite serious point which should be at least briefly discussed. Herberg speaks of "Hebraic religion" as being "history," "faith enacted as history," "redemptive history," but his exposition of the interrelation between religion and the way of history is correct only insofar as the Biblical idea of history is concerned. In the post-Biblical world, where Christianity and Judaism appear as religions distinct one from the other, the two religions also differ significantly in their concepts of history. Christianity takes its place *within* Western history, shaping its destiny and strongly influencing the formation of the very idea of Western history after the fall of the Roman Empire; for Christianity, therefore, history is always in varying degrees a religious issue. Post-Biblical Judaism, on the other hand, was excluded from active participation in what we call history, and this was paralleled by an inner change of attitude on the side of the Jews. Faced first with the world-encompassing power of the Roman Empire and later by a Christian Europe, Judaism was forced to ask whether God still acted through history. A new concept is formulated: God's withdrawal from history. God acts in and through human life, but not in the visible history of the nations; history no longer manifests "meaning": only the Messianic age will restore a meaningful historical order. It need scarcely be added that such a revision of the idea of God in history has significant effects on the Jewish conception of the God-man relation. But Herberg, in using the term "Hebraic religion" as including Judaism and Christianity, shows no awareness of this crucial distinction in the development of the two religions.

Some readers of unquestionable religious conviction will find it difficult to accept Herberg's insistence that Judaism rests uniquely on "the covenant of election," that "apart from that covenant Israel is as nothing and Jewish existence a mere delusion." Others will disagree with Herberg's contention, echoing so many other religious commentators on the modern world, that "the secularist culture of the past three centuries is in collapse"; rather, it will be maintained, we live in a time of disharmonious combination of pagan and religious factors, and there is no reason to believe that the intellectual crisis of modern man will or should necessarily lead to an abandonment of the secular structure of the Western world.

But precisely on this point a significant influence might emanate from this book. In the present reexamination of the traditional values of the West, the claims of Judaism are rarely given serious consideration, even by Jews themselves. And no wonder: the attempts of many official spokesmen of Judaism to "adjust" the modern Jew to the world have resulted in a watered-down pseudo-religion in which all central issues are carefully avoided, and theological discussion above all has been excluded. Such a Judaism may interest the modern sociologist and psychologist, and may serve some of the purposes of social adjustment for which it is designed, but it offers nothing to the person who asks for himself the question to which there is only the answer of faith.

Will Herberg has taken upon himself the task of confronting American Israel—and Judaism as a whole—with the basic issues of Jewish religion, without any apologetic or polemical intent; of confronting the relativism of our civilization with the divine Absolute; of confronting the human person with the personal God. A scholarly presentation of classical Jewish religion might have been more exact (Herberg refers sometimes to secondary sources), but this

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book has the great advantage of being personal: Herberg boldly stakes his own person and seeks to involve the person of the reader. We are accustomed to the use of occasional Biblical quotations to back up whatever passing political or sociological points a rabbi may wish to make in his sermons; but to find Herberg treating classical religious traditions as *directly* applicable to present-day needs comes as something of a shock. Yet it is a health-giving shock; the reader of Herberg's book will gain something more than a bare knowledge of the religious values of Judaism: he will gain a sense of their weight and of the seriousness of their implications. Some may be able to follow Herberg's lead and join that radical "return to religion" which he considers a sign of our times (though, curiously, he underestimates the actual and potential power of Jewish Orthodox youth in this country). Many more may simply be induced to revise their concept of Judaism and help to make Jewish religious consciousness a living corrective force *within* our secular civilization. But whatever use the reader may ultimately make of Herberg's book, he will hardly any longer be able to make his decision on the basis of boredom.

The Sag of the Heart

IN THE ABSENCE OF ANGELS. By HORTENSE CALISHER. Little, Brown. 243 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by ISA KAPP

IF SO many modern short stories, despite their spry manner and bright diction, settle into inevitable pallor, it is because their writers begin from such a misty and colorless notion of themselves. Their plots are pushed along by a fleeting grudge, a poignant reminiscence, a political attitude, in any case by some isolated provocation that stubbornly refuses to define the imagination from which it came. A writer like Hortense Calisher gains immediate distinction from her clarity and explicitness about her own origins and those of her characters. Thoroughly imbued with a sense of class and vocation, her stories satisfy at least that curiosity one normally feels about another's home, source of money, and style of expenditure.

Miss Calisher's collection of stories, *In The Absence of Angels,* uses these homely statistics to disclose a middle-class world that enfolds its characters like an octopus and dictates the quality of their experience. In "The Woman Who Was Everybody," a section manager in a New York department store, remembering the girlhood spent in her mother's rooming house near the Delaware River refineries, reads her mother's letter saying how glad she is that the daughter's college education was not wasted after all. Hester Elkin of "The Watchers" finds herself accepting the role of observer instead of participant in the boring conversations between the omnipresent relatives and the European mother who attaches both her tenacious hopes and unrelenting disapproval to her modern Americanized child. H. J. Elkin Jr. of "The Sound of Waiting" listens self-deprecatingly to his father's gilded rhetoric, and envies the jaunty "inner-directed" gentlemen of Diamond Jim Brady's day. Though their concerns are dissimilar, the same conflict of timidity and self-indulgence, pride and inadequacy, batters at the equanimity of all these middle-class citizens.

Miss Calisher is good at evoking boredom and frigidity, at exposing those climaxes of emptiness that turn into actual horror. Alcoholism flourishes among Greenwich's graveled walks; and an old-fashioned, music-flooded apartment for Columbia students is the scene of a suicide leap. Of course, with such disenchantment, we are back in the devitalized world of the *New Yorker*—which printed seven of Miss Calisher's stories—with the difference that *New Yorker* writers of fiction habitually and *resignedly* pull monsters from behind the screen of mediocrity, while Miss Calisher is still vulnerable and intense. But her insights are on the same level as theirs, functioning not so much to give some meaning to the life she represents as to produce that ultimate short-story denouement, the sag of the heart. A momentary disappointment, a transient sense of futility, are enough to paralyze the hero and end the story.

Part of the trouble is that Miss Calisher has herself not been completely weaned from the world of her stories. Where a writer like Thomas Mann, dealing in *Buddenbrooks* with an equally constricting environment, had the advantage of envisioning himself, the artist, in active flight from his emotional allegiance, she must settle for the pathos of the daughter complaining about the mother upon whom she still depends. She must exacerbate her dislike, for to whom can the writer be as self-pitying and finally as unmagnanimous as to himself and what belongs

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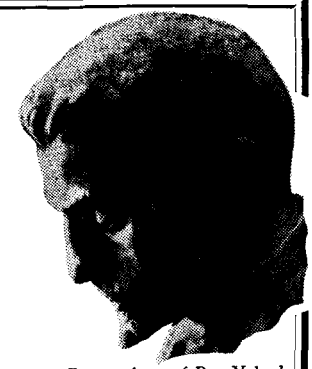
HIS DREAM: **TO UNITE HIS PEOPLE**

HIS MEANS: **A FORGOTTEN LANGUAGE**

Tongue of the Prophets: THE LIFE STORY OF ELIEZER BEN YEHUDA



From a bust of Ben Yehuda by Joseph Hebroni

by ROBERT ST. JOHN, author of *Shalom Means Peace*

Eliezer Ben Yehuda dreamed of a Jewish state in Palestine and a Hebrew language which would be the living voice of the people, not the dead tongue of the prophets. A fanatic devoted to his idea, yet he had time to have two great loves, eleven children, and a vast number of arguments in his life span. More than any other man, he laid the cornerstone for the Zionist movement, and completed the groundwork for a unique and monumental dictionary of Hebrew, designed to adapt it so that men could worship, curse, love or order groceries in the language of the Torah.

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to him? Although Miss Calisher is generally an excellent craftsman who reliably estimates the effect of her words, stories like "The Sound of Waiting," where she seems closely to identify with the injured hero, wring from her a language that comes not from the mind but from the nerves. "Sunday was the day you hung around listening to the echoes of yourself. In the fat silences after dinner, everyone hovered. . . ." Yorkville is a place whose "stunted inhabitants had seemed to him at first like a race of anthropophagi whose faces he never would be able to distinguish from one another," and H. J. Elkin prowls "the dim drowsy art galleries, standing before each picture as if it were a window to the world." The real population of Yorkville, the content of the gallery paintings, as well as the precise word, are all sacrificed to the involved sensibility.

But when the events and surroundings touch her tangentially rather than crucially, Miss Calisher is altogether a different writer, creating such disciplined and mordant portraits as that of the middle-aged perpetual student who cannot usher a guest into his apartment without switching on the phonograph ("In Greenwich There Are Many Gravelled Walks"); or that of the bar habitué in "Night Riders of Northville": "Dicky is more than a man who lives for the occasion—he is a man who cannot live without it, however small . . . one can imagine him on route to an experience or possibly from it, but never actually in the middle of it."

Two of her best stories treat Jews and Jewish problems, and here too the tone is natural because the writer is distant and undefensive. In "Old Stock," Mrs. Elkin turns up again, not so much as the mother of Hester, but as the kind of genteel Jewish woman who experiences an involuntary thrill of excitement when she is mistaken for a Gentile. "One of the Chosen" is told from the point of view of a successful Jewish lawyer who has always pitied misfits and fancied himself hail-fellow-well-met to his Gentile friends, until in middle age a casual college class reunion forces him to reconstruct his whole image of his past. Both of these stories take time to give the reader some knowledge about the minds of the characters and to give the characters a clearer idea of themselves. This is what has to happen, even in short fiction, if we are to feel, when the plot is done, that some process of our responsiveness and imagination has begun.

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The History of the Great Crime

BRÉVIAIRE DE LA HAINE: LE IIIE REICH ET LES JUIFS ("Breviary of Hate: The Third Reich and the Jews"). By LÉON POLIAKOV. Calmann-Lévy, Paris. 385 pp. 780 francs.

Reviewed by HANNAH ARENDT

LÉON POLIAKOV's excellent book on the Third Reich and the Jews is the first to describe the last phases of the Nazi regime on the basis, strictly, of primary source material. This consists chiefly of documents presented at the Nuremberg Trials and published in several volumes by the American government under the title *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. These volumes contain, in addition to captured Nazi archives, a considerable number of sworn reports and affidavits by former Nazi officials. Mr. Poliakov, with a reasoned obstinacy, tells the story as the documents themselves unfold it, thus avoiding the prejudices and preconceived judgments that mar almost all the other published accounts. He has an eye for the relevant, and possesses complete and intimate knowledge of Nazi Germany's complicated administrative machinery, of the fluctuating relations between the different services, as well as the ups and downs of the different cliques around Hitler.

The excellence of this book can be measured by the abundance of errors, misunderstandings, and misjudgments it corrects in every chapter. There are also many minor revisions. Nazis like Alfred Rosenberg, whose power has been generally exaggerated, are cut down to size; such little known facts as the preponderant role in the organization of extermination played by Austrians are given their due importance. And without this resolute clearing away of the whole thicket of error and rash generalization, the story could not have been properly told.

One of Mr. Poliakov's signal achievements is the reconstruction of the chronology of the extermination process. Though there may still be some room for speculation as to the exact time when the gas chambers were decided upon, we now know with certainty that Hitler —perhaps after discussion with Bormann and Goebbels—issued the order for organized mass murder either in the fall of 1940, when it had become evident that the war could not be ended shortly, or early in 1941, during the preparation of the attack on Russia. By this decision, he automatically discarded several more moderate "solutions." Among them was the Madagascar project, originally conceived by Himmler and adopted officially by the German Foreign Office before the outbreak of the war. Also proposed—it was a pet idea of Himmler's—was the mass sterilization by X-ray of all male Jews (along with the intellectual elite of other non-Germanic peoples); they would be told simply to line up before windows and fill out fake questionnaires, being kept in ignorance of what was to happen to them. It would have been more practicable, however, to exterminate the Jews by starvation in the ghettos—a course favored by such "moderate" Nazis as Poland's Governor General Hans Frank—or by working them to death, as Goebbels and Heydrich suggested. Hitler, as usual, dared to seize upon the most radical solution, and—again as usual—was right, *for his own purposes,* insofar as the gas chamber promised the surest results.

The Madagascar project had been a compromise between the Nazi brand of anti-Semitism and the older forms dear to German nationalism, which saw a "solution" of the Jewish question in Zionism; with the outbreak of the war, however, such compromises had been "outdated by events"—as Hitler liked to put it. Mass sterilization had proved to be impracticable; the machinery simply did not work effectively. Starvation was a slow process, full of unpredictable hazards, and likely to spread epidemics and cause needless and prolonged discussion among Germans themselves, as well as among subject peoples; all that could be stopped by drastic and irrevocable measures.

There was the intention, finally, of extracting the maximum of work from the Jews, who being doomed in any case, could be exploited without mercy; a course that appealed to the Nazis as much as it did to the Wehrmacht, whose manpower requirements were increasing constantly. But this plan suffered from an inherent contradiction: if a man is to work, he must have the necessities for a more or less normal process of life, otherwise he will die.

THE first mass executions carried out by special troops, the so-called *Einsatzgruppen,* took place immediately after the invasion of Russia. In the fall of 1941, blueprints for gas chambers were ordered and soon afterwards approved by Hitler himself. The first mobile gas trucks

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were ready by the spring of 1942, and the huge death factories at Auschwitz and Belzec by the fall of 1942. From then until the fall of 1944—that is, throughout the crucial years of the war—the trains carrying Jews from every corner of Europe to Poland had priority over all other rail traffic except troop movements. Contrary to present notions, it was Hitler whose orders set the systematic extermination process in motion, whereas Himmler seems to have obeyed rather reluctantly. And it was the latter who ordered the horror to be halted, in the fall of 1944, and the death factories dismantled and razed. Hitler himself never learned—apparently because nobody had the nerve to tell him—that what he considered one of his greatest "achievements" had been prematurely terminated.

The surviving Jews and other inmates of Auschwitz and the remaining death camps were herded westward before the Russian armies, dying on their way by the thousands, and put into "ordinary" concentration camps in Germany, where tens of thousands more starved to death before the Allied troops finally arrived. What met the liberating armies in these camps horrified them more than anything they had seen on the field of battle, and actually did more to arouse public opinion than anything that had leaked out about the death factories in Poland—which had by then disappeared

in the next issue of PARTISAN REVIEW—

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without leaving much visible trace. Ironically, however, the corpses and survivors that the British and American soldiers saw at Buchenwald and elsewhere were the victims largely of the sole unpremeditated crime committed by the Nazis—unpremeditated insofar as it was the result of the chaos during the last months of the war rather than of deliberate design.

This chronicle, though correct, tells only part of the story, the Jewish part. Mr. Poliakov is the first to understand and stress the close connection between the mass murder of Jews and an earlier experiment of the Nazis, the "mercy" killings during the first year of the war of 70,000 deranged and feeble-minded people in Germany. Not only did this precede the mass murder of other peoples; Hitler's order of September 1, 1939 (significantly enough, on the very first day of hostilities) to liquidate all "incurably sick persons" in the Third Reich set the stage for everything that followed. It was certainly no accident that this decree was not carried out literally and that none but mental cases were killed; it is also possible that what caused the killings to be suspended after a year and a half was, as Poliakov and others maintain, the protests of the victims' families and of other Germans. Nor is it likely that the fact that the beginning of the mass murder of Jews practically coincided with the termination of the "mercy" killings was due to accident either.

It looks as though Hitler, bent on realizing his race program by organized mass murder, followed at any given moment whatever line of least resistance promised the most immediate results. That he never abandoned his original intention of liquidating all "racially unfit" persons, regardless of nationality, can be seen from his plan to introduce a "national health bill" in Germany after the war, according to which the blood relatives of "sick persons, particularly those with lung and heart diseases," would "no longer be able to remain among the public and no longer be allowed to produce children. What [would] happen to these families [was to] be the subject of further orders."

By showing that the first day of the war was also the first day of organized mass murder, Mr. Poliakov throws new light on certain aspects of totalitarianism in general, and of Nazism in particular. Only Germany's war-enforced isolation from the Western world—which meant also from fascist fellow-travelers in non-totalitarian countries—made possible the full development of the totalitarian tendencies inherent in the Nazi regime. Hitler more than once expressed his thankfulness that the war, regardless of all doubt and fear as to its outcome, had given him the opportunity to realize certain "ideas" that would have had to remain in abeyance otherwise.

The war in all probability conferred still another "blessing" upon Hitler. Pacifism, under the impact of the new experience of machine-made warfare, became after 1918 the first ideological movement to insist on equating war with sheer slaughter. The Nazi party during the 1920's developed side by side with German pacifism and through conflict with it. In distinction, however, from all purely nationalist propagandists for militarism, the Nazis never questioned the correctness of the pacifist equation; rather, they frankly approved of all forms of murder, and of war as one among them. In their opinion all notions of military honor or chivalry, with their implied respect for certain universal laws of humanity, were so much hypocrisy, and included in that hypocrisy was any conception of war that envisaged the defeat of the enemy without his utter destruction. For the Nazis, as for the pacifists, war was slaughter.

This seems to be why they waited until the actual outbreak of war before embarking on their "mercy-killing" program; reasoning that with so many healthy young men being slaughtered at the front, Germans would not pay much attention now to the slaughtering of "worthless" people at home, and there would be no serious resistance to the execution of the program. For what difference was there between one kind of killing and any other? But subsequent experience taught the Nazis that the families of mentally sick persons are not prone to listen to "logic" when the life of one of their own is at stake; this may be the reason—or one of the reasons—why in his above-quoted draft of a "national health bill," which was probably outlined in 1943, two years after the suspension of the "mercy killings," Hitler proposed to murder the relatives of sick people too.

Whatever the true case was, the connection between mass extermination and "mercy killing" in Germany is one of Poliakov's most important insights, and he traces this in all its ramifications. The physicians, engineers, and others who perfected the techniques of euthanasia during the first year of the war for application to German mental cases were the same ones later put in charge of the installations at Auschwitz

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and Belzec. Even more conclusive as to the reality of this connection was the fact, inexplicable otherwise, that the same effort was made in Poland, as previously in the smaller death factories in Germany, to perfect the machinery of death and "attain the goal without torture and without agony." Cruelty and brutality, still prevalent among the soldiers and policemen selected at random for concentration-camp duties, were conspicuously absent among the death factory technicians. For them, as Himmler once put it, anti-Semitism was like "de-lousing," race problems were a question of "cleanliness," and the "solution of the problem of blood by action" meant elimination of "contaminating elements."

ANOTHER of Mr. Poliakov's major contributions is his deflation of the myth that the German officers' corps and the old pre-Hitler civil servants, particularly those in the Foreign Office and the diplomatic corps, either did not know what was going on or, when they did, protested. General Jodl himself had carefully weighed the pros and cons of extermination policy in terms of German morale and had concluded that its obvious liabilities were outweighed by one great psychological factor—the ordinary German soldier would fight better once he knew he had burnt all bridges behind him, and was involved in indissoluble complicity with the perpetrators of an enormous crime. Wehrmacht units, not SS troops, initiated the so-called *Heuaktion* in which some forty to fifty thousand children were kidnaped from Eastern Europe and brought to Germany. And it was Undersecretary of State Luther who, together with the German military authorities, was responsible for the extermination of the Serbian Jews.

Some Germans, of course, did protest, both Nazi and non-Nazi. Mr. Poliakov quotes from a few of the protests that were set down in writing. Not quite fairly, perhaps, he is amazed at the arguments used, which stress military and economic disadvantages, the nervous strain on the executioners, and deplore the bad effect on the morale of the German troops and the conquered populations. It is unlikely that these protests could have been voiced at all had they invoked moral considerations. What is more remarkable is that few of them came from the German military and civil hierarchy, and that more were made, probably, by old Nazi party members and even SS leaders.

Up to now it has not been sufficiently recognized that the only country on the Nazi side of the lines that resolutely and effectively shielded the Jews was Germany's one important European ally, Italy. (The one other center of refuge for Jews appears to have been in the areas of Croatia where Tito's partisans were firmly established.) Mr. Poliakov discusses the Italian episode at length in connection with Vichy France's attitude towards Jews, of which he gives a complete and accurate account. Vichy's willingness to cooperate precisely on the score of anti-Semitism was such that one can well believe that Adolf Eichmann, the organizer of the deportations of Jews from all parts of Europe, did not miscalculate the psychology of the Vichy French when, at a particularly critical moment, he actually threatened them with the possibility of "excluding France as one of the countries of [Jewish] evacuation."

NOWHERE does Mr. Poliakov's integrity and objectivity show to better advantage than in his account of the ghettos and the role of their *Judenräte,* or Jewish councils. He neither accuses nor excuses, but reports fully and faithfully what the sources tell him—the growing apathy of the victims as well as their occasional heroism, the terrible dilemma of the *Judenräte,* their despair as well as their confusion, their complicity and their sometimes pathetically ludicrous ambitions. In the famous and very influential *Reichsvertretung* of German Jews, which functioned smoothly until the last German Jew had been deported, he sees the forerunner of the *Judenräte* of the Polish ghettos; he makes it clear that the German Jews, in this respect too, served the Nazis as guinea pigs in their investigation of the problem of how to get people to help carry out their own death sentences, the last turn of the screw in the totalitarian scheme of total domination.

These are but a few samples taken from the extraordinary abundance of new factual material in this book. Anyone who wants to know "what really happened" and "how it really happened" —the "what" and the "how" being not only the most terrible experience of our generation, but probably the most significant too—cannot afford to overlook this study, and would perhaps do best to begin with it. (Unhappily, it has not yet interested any American publisher.) The close documentation of the book and its almost complete refusal to indulge in guesswork will serve as a solitary contrast to an alarming type of "neo-German" literature that has begun to appear lately in that country. For, under the

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pretext of giving the "what" and "how" of what really happened under Hitler, we are presented with a disgusting spectacle in which vanity, complacency, and ambition are displayed at their worst: the civil and military hierarchy, though denying their all too obvious complicity in Hitler's crimes, nevertheless try eagerly to show the world what very important and distinguished roles they once played under him—and, consequently, are capable of playing again in the future. (See Peter de Mendelssohn's "Germany's Generals Stage a Comeback," in COMMENTARY of October 1951.) The doubtful value of these memoirs and autobiographies as source material has been pointed out again and again by competent authorities, but this has not diminished their popular appeal in Germany. Part of this is due to the German public's justified desire to get at the basic truth about a series of events whose horror was such that the real facts—it is assumed—were kept highly secret, and therefore can be told correctly only by actual participants. From this point of view, it seems natural that the more prominent a man was in the Nazi regime the more valuable his "confessions" ought to be.

The truth is, as I think Mr. Poliakov's book helps make clear, that the secrets of the Nazi regime were not so well kept by the Nazis themselves. They behaved according to a basic tenet of our time, which may be remembered in the future as the "Age of Paper." Today no man in an official position can take the slightest action without immediately starting a stream of files, memos, reports, and publicity releases. The Nazis left behind them mountains of records that make it unnecessary to confide the slaking of our thirst for knowledge to the memories of people who were in the main untrustworthy to begin with. Nor could it have been otherwise. Hitler's great ambition was to found a millennial empire and his great fear, in case of defeat, was lest he and his fellows go unremembered in centuries to come. Red tape was not simply a necessity forced on the Nazis by the organizational methods of our time; it was also something they enthusiastically welcomed and multiplied, and so they left to history, and *for* history, typewritten records of each and every one of their crimes in at least ten copies.

THERE is a mystery about the Nazi regime, but it has nothing to do with secrets. It resides solely in a response, humanly unavoidable, that makes us go on asking, "Why—but why?" long after all the facts are reported, all stages of the process known, all conceivable motives considered. Apart from a few not too relevant remarks on the German national character, Mr. Poliakov's book neither poses nor attempts to answer this question. Yet it does not suppress it either; the author is too scrupulous and has too much intellectual integrity to content himself with those glib sociological and psychological rationalizations that have become modern man's standard refuge from reality. It is this point, precisely—this determination to refuse easy explanations—that, in my opinion, should be made the decisive criterion by which to judge any and all attempts to describe and explain these recent and unprecedented events.

Only if the reader continues, after everything about the exterminations has been made tangible and plausible, to feel his first reaction of outraged disbelief, only then will he be in the position to begin to understand that totalitarianism, unlike all other known modes of tyranny and oppression, has brought into the world a *radical* evil characterized by its divorce from all humanly comprehensible motives of wickedness.

It would be the greatest error to assume that these horrors are a thing of the past. Concentration and extermination camps are the most novel and most significant devices of all totalitarian forms of domination. Reports on the Soviet Russian system, whose "forced labor camps" are extermination camps in disguise, are numerous enough and trustworthy enough to permit comparison with the Nazi system. The differences between the two are real, but not radical; both systems result in the destruction of people selected as "superfluous." The development of this notion of "superfluity" is one of the central calamities of our century, and has produced its most horrible "solution." Research into Nazism, therefore, so frequently minimized today as "mere" history, is indispensable for our understanding of the problems of the present and the immediate future.

David in Love

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA. By ARI IBN-ZAHAV. Translated from the Hebrew by I. M. LASK. Crown. 375 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by ROBERT LANGBAUM

THIS novel, first published in Palestine about twenty years ago and now in its nineteenth

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Hebrew edition, advances the proposition that David did not see Bathsheba for the first time when, at the height of his career, he looked down from his palace roof into Uriah's garden. Instead, they had been neighbors in Bethlehem, where they fell in love at a tender age. Their marriage was prevented by Bathsheba's mother, but in all the years before they met again David never forgot Bathsheba; his love of her inspired the first psalms, and it was to impress her that he joined Saul's army and killed Goliath (he had to "compensate" for being excessively short). Indeed, all his mighty exploits were performed for her sake, and though he had to do with many women, it was always the Bathsheba in them that attracted him. This is the story the dying David tells from his deathbed, the story the chroniclers never knew: "my life as it really was."

Certainly this version is less aggressively sexual, it is positively *domestic* compared to the Bible story, in which we are simply told that David saw Bathsheba, sent for her, lay with her. The suddenness of the lovers' conjunction is consistent with the general violence of the Bible story, preparing us for David's treatment of Uriah and for God's crude retribution: David's daughter is raped, all his sons except Solomon are killed. As a sexual transaction, it is appropriate to a polygamous Oriental world of harems and bride-prices.

Ibn-Zahav introduces into this same world—taken intact from the Bible—a chivalric ideal of love; his Bathsheba is the *donna angelicata* of a later culture that exalted sexual sublimation. It is because David's love is unconsummated that he performs knightly deeds and, like Petrarch for Laura, writes poetry. This might have worked had the author set up a conflict between the lovers and their world. But they both recognize without demur that Bathsheba must go to the man her parents have sold her to, and David himself carries on magnificently unaware of the high commitment the author has imposed upon him, taking unto himself wives and concubines with all the innocent acquisitiveness of his Biblical original. The result is often unintentional parody: "I had, however, taken new wives. There were six now, and besides, I took concubines. I say it to my shame, but when I went to the couch of any woman, I thought only of Bathsheba."

The trouble is that the author has taken not too many but too few liberties with the Biblical

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account: given his intention, he ought to have reorganized and reproportioned it so as to centralize the love story and allow it to give tone and meaning to the whole. Instead, he has grafted his love story on to what is otherwise a paraphrase of the Bible, and the result is that the love story seems pallid by contrast.

Significantly, the subordinate story of David and Michal is more successful just because there is in it a hard-headed ambivalence which involves it in the historical setting. Michal was Saul's daughter and there is always in David's love for her an unmeasured quantity of political consideration. Their love, too, is unconsummated, but in a crudely literal way: they are interrupted in the bridal chamber by Saul's soldiers. When David becomes king, he demands of Saul's party that they return Michal—partly because he still loves her, partly as a mark of political recognition. Michal emerges as a tragic figure. She loves David but remains loyal to her father's house, returning to David after he has overthrown that house because he is, as she says, "my lord and king." But after her brother, Saul's heir, has been murdered, she answers the summons to David's bedchamber clothed in black, and renounces him. It is Michal who points out the paradox in David's moral position. When he bids her forget politics, she says, "You are a king by day and a boy playing at night." Her renunciation of David, and her death, are the best scenes in the book.

It can be said for such a novel as this that it does after all send one back to the Bible, but then the ensuing comparison hardly redounds to its advantage. Going back, one is impressed by the audacity of the Biblical characterization of David. He laments the deaths of Saul and Jonathan but in the very next line sets about taking over their kingdom. Not only does he condemn to death the man who has killed his enemies and secured him the throne, but he passes on to Solomon the job of execution. As father he laments the death of Absalom, but as king he has long since planned to disinherit him in favor of Solomon: can he be immune from the relief the reader feels that Solomon's succession is now secure?

The paradoxes fall into a profound pattern. David emerges as the instrument of God, of the Historical Idea, who has the historical dirty work done for him by others. The disposal of Uriah is the one piece of dirty work he undertakes himself, and even there he manages to make his responsibility equivocal. For Uriah he pays; and yet, it is that piece of dirty work which produces Solomon. Here is a David story for some really *modern* novelist to take up.

Book Reviewers in This Issue

Richard H. S. Crossman, a Labor member of Parliament, served on the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine in 1946, and is the author of *Palestine Mission* (1947).

Nahum N. Glatzer is an associate professor of Jewish history at Brandeis University.

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This *I believe*

by *Bertrand Russell*

IT IS URGED THAT, in a war between Liberals and fanatics, the fanatics are sure to win, owing to their more unshakable belief in the righteousness of their cause. Fanatics have failed, over and over again because they have attempted the impossible, or because . . . they were too unscientific to adopt the right means; they have failed also because they roused the hostility of those whom they wished to coerce. In every important war since 1700 the more democratic side has been victorious. This is partly because democracy . . . does not demand a distortion of facts in the interests of theory. Russia and Canada, which have similar climactic conditions, are both interested in obtaining better wheat; in Canada this aim is pursued experimentally, in Russia by interpreting the Marxist Scriptures.

"Systems of dogma. . . have the disadvantage of involving persecution of valuable sections of the population. Spain was ruined by the expulsion of the Jews and Moors; France suffered by the emigration of Huguenots . . . Germany would probably have been first in the field with the atomic bomb but for Hitler's hatred of Jews . . .

". . . Our world needs various things if it is to escape disaster, . . . one of the most necessary is that, in the nations which still uphold Liberal beliefs, these beliefs should be whole-hearted and profound, not apologetic towards dogmatisms of the right and of the left, but deeply persuaded of the value of liberty, scientific freedom, and mutual forbearance. For without these beliefs life on our . . . planet will hardly continue to be possible." *

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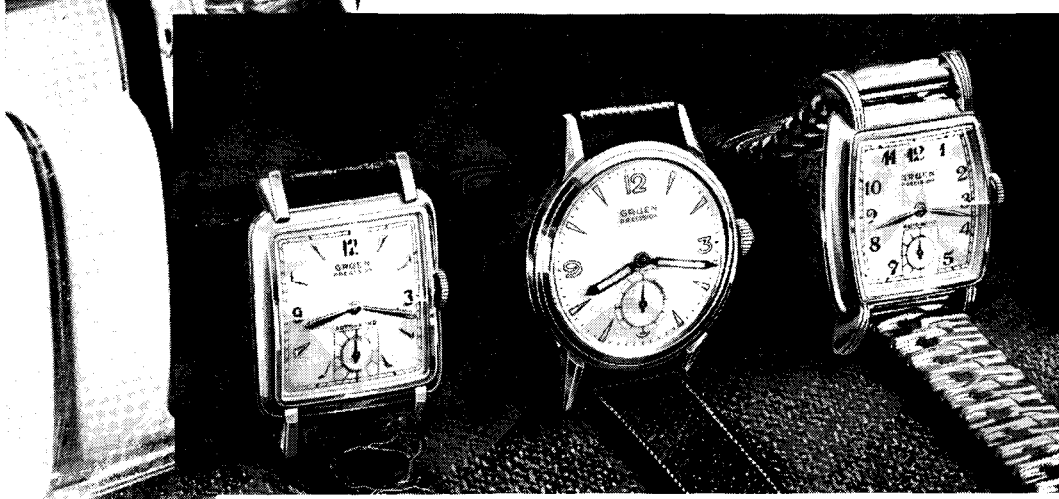

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